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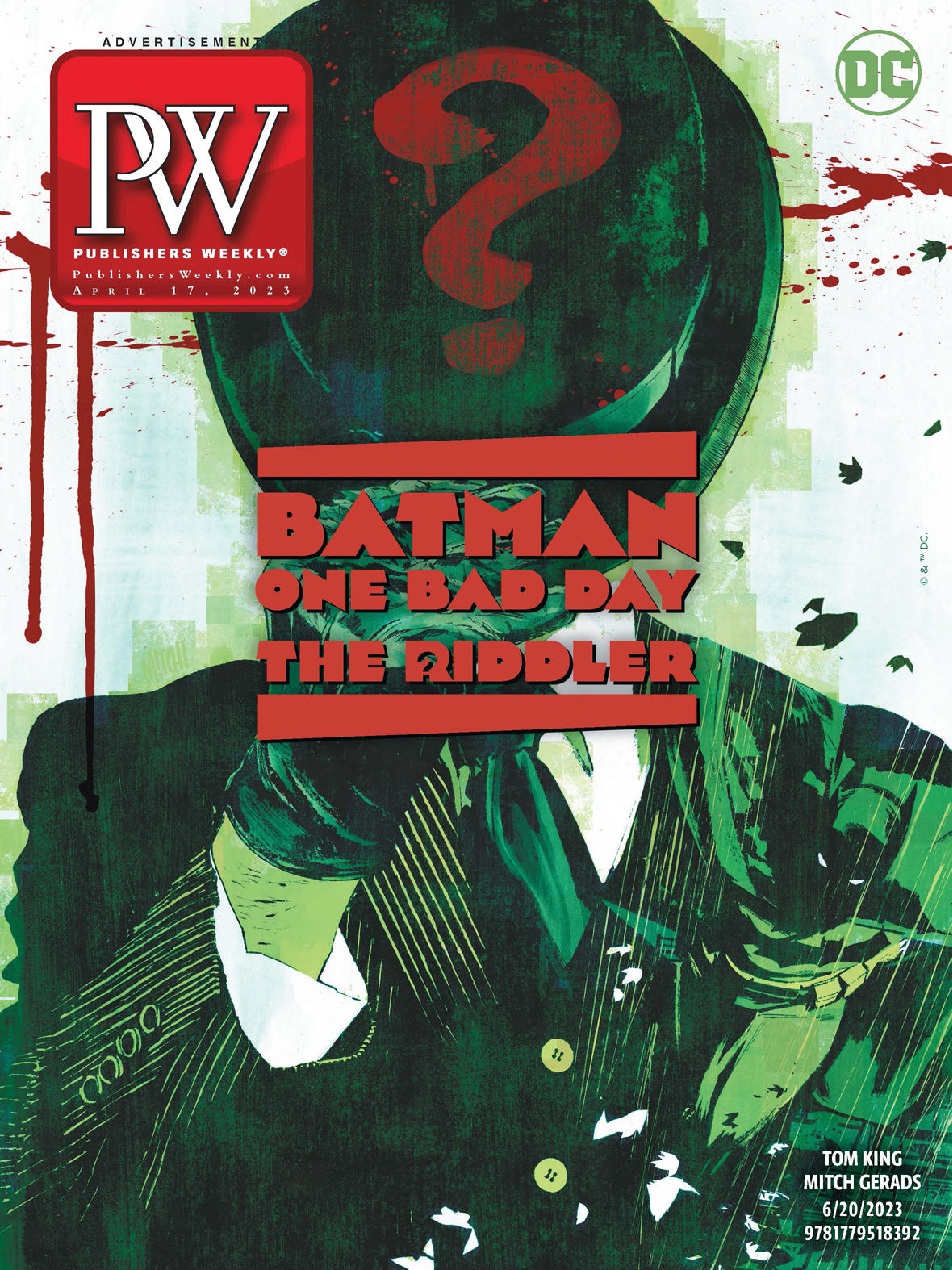
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PUBLISHERS WEEKLY ■ THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING AND BOOKSELLING

Tania James

Colonialism clashes with the creation (and theft) of art in James's boisterous new novel, *Loot*. See our review on p. 37.

A NEW THRILLER WRITER'S FIRST BOOK IS A HIT!

"Takes the modern medical thriller to the next level… Perfectly balanced with enough twists and turns to keep you guessing until the end."
— **Steve Konkoly, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post Bestselling Thriller Writer**

"A gripping story of subterfuge, intrigue, and drama that holds twists and turns many won't see coming… An outstanding choice for libraries looking for powerful medical thrillers."
—**Midwest Book Review**

"A credible and all too timely medical thriller with a hero who could go viral and a villain who's truly, viscerally hateable."
—**Kirkus Reviews**

"The methodically-paced novel builds its narrative tension well... The clarity with which the story's medical elements are handled makes the tale both sobering and convincing… Dr. Mallory Hayes is a fascinating, complicated heroine … Five out of five stars!"
—**Foreword Reviews**

"The author draws heavily upon her background as an allergist/immunologist dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. The result is a shocking narrative involving biological terrorism. If you enjoy spine-chilling medical thrillers, this one's for you!"
—**Norm Goldman, Book Pleasures**

"A wild, richly rewarding ride through religious fanaticism, creepy, cutting-edge medical reality, as well as selfless, caring, and truly evil people."
—**Joe Lane, Thriller Writer and Author of *Aftershock***

PARTICLES IN THE AIR
JENNA PODJASEK, MD

"A hold-your-breath,
action-packed medical thriller…
An extraordinary and exhilarating read."
— **Readers' Favorite Book Reviews**

"Masterful integration of medical science, nightmarish scenarios, and riveting action."
—**Dr. Cristina LePort, Author of the Medical Thriller *Dissection***

"Like a Michael Crichton novel, it weaves together an intriguing storyline… A true (and truly frightening) *tour de force*."
—**John Winn Miller, Author of the Maritime Thriller *The Hunt for the Peggy C***

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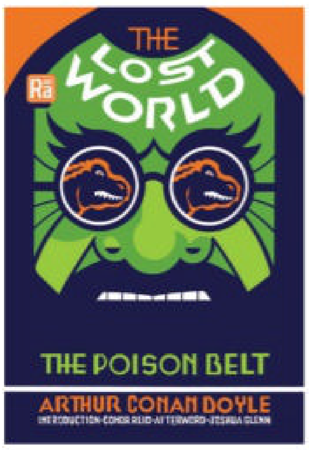
New and forthcoming from the MIT Press's Radium Age


THE LOST WORLD
Ra
THE POISON BELT
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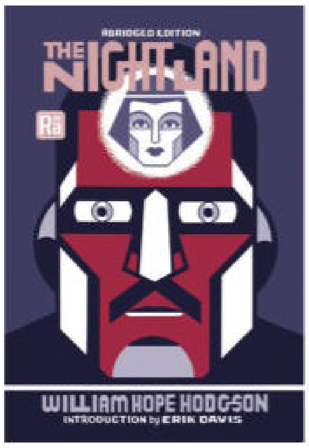
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Ra
WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON
INTRODUCTION by ERIK DAVIS

THEODORE SAVAGE
Ra
CICELY HAMILTON
INTRODUCTION by SUSAN R. GRAYZEL

From one of the earliest feminist science fiction writers, a novel that envisions the fall of civilization—and the plight of the modern woman in a post-apocalyptic wilderness.

"This novel deserves to be rediscovered. Readers will have much to chew on."
–Publishers Weekly

"Brilliant, nuanced, and deep. A terrifying and prescient science fiction novel."
–Foreword Reviews STARRED REVIEW

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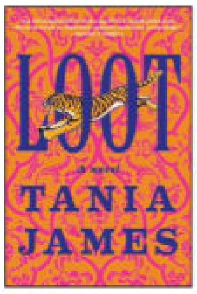
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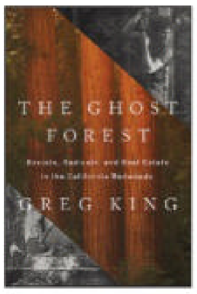
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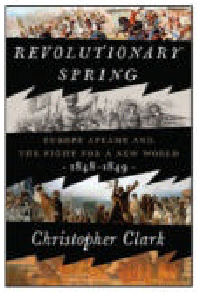
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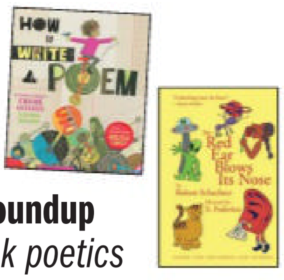
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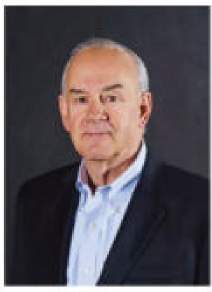
The Week in **Publishing**

Llano County Commissioners tabled a vote over a proposal to close the county's public libraries. The proposal came after a federal judge found that the library board in the Texas country infringed the constitutional rights of library users by unilaterally removing books it deemed inappropriate.

KINGSLAND LIBRARY

Bookstore sales in February increased 10.7% over a year ago, rising to $609 million from $550 million in 2022. The February increase followed a nearly 16% sales jump in January, putting bookstore sales up 14.3% in the first two months of 2023 over the same period in 2022.



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Rick Wolff, who published dozens of bestsellers as a business editor for Warner Books, Hachette Book Group, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, died April 10. He was 71.

LAMBDALITERARY

Lambda Literary received a $250,000 gift from author and philanthropist Chuck Forester in support of the organization's efforts to advocate for LGBTQ writers and books.

Solid State Books' staff officially unionized with United Food & Commercial Workers Local 400 Union. Management has voluntarily recognized the union, which will cover seven employees at the Washington, D.C., bookstore.

Online & On-Air

Velocity of Content

Senior writer Andrew Albanese examines what to expect during the London Book Fair's 2023 run, set for April 18–20.
publishersweekly.com/london-bookfair

More to Come

The hosts take a close look at DSTLRY, David Steinberger and Chip Mosher's much-anticipated publishing and collectibles venture.
publishersweekly.com/dstlry

Children's Bookshelf

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Author Maggie Tokuda-Hall calls out edits proposed by Scholastic after she was asked to revise an author's note in her book about Japanese American incarceration during WWII.
publishersweekly.com/tokudahall

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News

Is Flat the New Up Again?

Higher costs and lower sales led to disappointing results at three of the four largest trade publishers last year, reviving an old publishing mantra

Operating Performance, 2021–2022

($ and € in millions)

HarperCollins

	2021	2022	Change
Total Sales	$2,146.0	$2,046.0	-4.6%
EBITDA	$320.0	$204.0	-36.2%
Margin	14.9%	10.0%	–

Lagardère Publishing

	2021	2022	Change
Total Sales	€2,598.0	€ 2,748.0	5.8%
Recurring EBIT	€351.0	€302.0	-14.0%
Margin	13.5%	11.0%	–

Penguin Random House

	2021	2022	Change
Total Sales	€4,030.0	€ 4,223.0	4.8%
Operating EBIT	€755.0	€666.0	-11.8
Margin	18.7%	15.8%	–

Simon & Schuster

	2021	2022	Change
Total Sales	$993.0	$1,177.0	18.5%
Operating income	$213.0	$248.0	16.4%
Margin	21.4%	22.2%	–

SOURCE: COMPANY REPORTS, PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Rising costs and slowing demand caught up with three of the four major publishers that release their financial results, leading to a decline in profits at Penguin Random House, Lagardère Publishing, and HarperCollins in 2022 compared to 2021. Only Simon & Schuster was able to counter the trend, posting a 16.4% increase in earnings on an 18.5% gain in sales.

Executives at the three publishers where profits fell cited similar reasons for the decline—namely, higher costs across all areas of the business due to inflation and ongoing kinks in the supply chain, coupled with easing demand after two years of pandemic-fed surges. The slowdown in sales caught Amazon with lots of unsold inventory, including books, and resulted in a significant reduction in book orders for long stretches of 2022.

HC CEO Brian Murray cited a significant drop in orders from Amazon as one of the major factors in its difficult year, with a big drop in sales and earnings in the second half, resulting in a 4.6% decline in revenue and 36.2% drop in profits. The decline in its financial performance, as well as an uncertain outlook for 2023, led HC to begin implementing a 5% reduction in its North American workforce in January. Parent company News Corp ordered cuts across all of its subsidiaries, and they're expected to be completed by the end of June.

Sales rose 4.8% at PRH in the year, to €4.22 billion (about $4.6 billion at current exchange rates), but EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) fell to €666 million. The U.S. accounted for 57% of total PRH sales. Parent company Bertelsmann said that the publishing business in the U.S. "reflected the normalization of demand following the strong sales of the pandemic years, as well as the challenges posed by inflation and supply-chain pressures." Nihar Malaviya, who took over as interim global CEO from Markus Dohle at the beginning of the year, called the results a "mixed performance" but acknowledged that PRH "fell short of our collective targets."

Revenue at Lagardère Publishing, the parent company of Hachette Book Group, was €2.75 billion ($2.94 billion) in 2022, up 5.8% over 2021, but earnings fell 14%, to €302 million. The company attributed the sales increase to acquisitions, including a full year of sales from Workman Publishing (which was acquired by Hachette Book Group in September 2021), as well as to a €87 million gain from exchange rates.

HBG's financial performance mirrored that of the larger publishing group. CEO Michael Pietsch said total sales were up over 2021 because of the Workman purchase and "were down slightly" from the peak of 2021, excluding Workman results. Profits fell because of "sharply rising manufacturing and freight costs," he added.

Even with its strong results in 2022, S&S couldn't escape the pressure of rising costs. After sales jumped 26% in the first six months of 2022 and profits soared 64%, results softened in the second half. Still, the 18.5% increase in sales put total S&S revenue above $1 billion for the first time since it became a standalone trade publisher.

CEO Jonathan Karp said revenue was up in all of S&S's operating groups, with audio posting the biggest increase. The company also benefitted from publishing the majority of mega-bestselling author Colleen Hoover's titles, and

Karp was particularly excited by the performance of S&S's international division, which saw sales up in all areas, led by a 21% jump at Simon & Schuster UK.

Offered a chance to make a prediction for how S&S will do in 2023, Karp demurred, explaining that, given the uncertainty surrounding not only the economy but who S&S's future owner will be, he preferred to "enjoy the moment, and I think I speak on behalf of everyone at Simon & Schuster." Lagardère executives were the only ones to provide a forecast, saying they expect sales and earnings to be flat in the year.

The best any executives could say about prospects for 2023 is that they expect sales to remain above prepandemic levels. Data from Circana BookScan shows that unit sales in 2022 were 12% above 2019, and that through the first quarter of 2023 units were about flat compared to a year ago.

It looks like the old publishing mantra that "flat is the new up" may be appropriate once again.

—Jim Milliot

Scribner Launches a Poetry Program

This summer, Scribner will launch a new poetry program, publishing one original volume of poetry by a contemporary poet each season. The program will be spearheaded by Scribner editorial director Kathryn Belden, executive editor Chris Richards, and assistant editor Emily Polson. All three will acquire books for the program and plan to be "collaborative" in their editorial efforts.

Richards, who previously published poetry at FSG and Penguin Press, looks forward to drawing on his prior experience. "We all have different sensibilities, which will serve the list well," he said. "The great poetry of our moment is various and multivocal, as it probably always has been, and combining our distinctive tastes will allow us to better approach the breadth of what's being written today."

Scribner has published a handful of poetry titles in the past, but this is its first attempt in a structured program. Belden and Richards noted several "poetry gems" on Scribner's backlist, including volumes by William Butler Yeats and Edith Wharton, as well as Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, which was reissued last year, with a new cover and an introduction by Jesmyn Ward.

Scribner has also published the Best American Poetry series for more than 30 years. Edited by David Lehman and revolving guest editors (including Robert Hass, Tracy K. Smith, and Natasha Trethewey), it's been called a "mainstay of the poetry publication world" by the Academy of American Poets.

The program's inaugural title will be *Bread and Circus*, the second collection by Philadelphia poet laureate Airea D. Matthews, slated for May 30. In September, Scribner will publish Sam Sax's *Pig*, as well as the 2023 edition of Best American Poetry, curated by Lehman and guest editor Elain Equi. Slated for February 2024 is Diana Khoi Nguyen's *Root*

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Fractures. Also, in the "near future," Scribner plans to publish *Pleasure Principle*, the debut collection by poet Madeleine Cravens, a mentee of Louise Glück and Shane McCrae.

By way of marketing and publicity, Scribner will release a chapbook featuring selections from *Bread and Circus*, *Pig*, and *Root Fractures*; host a launch event series in the summer with group readings as well as gatherings for media, booksellers, and the poetry community; and present programming at the 2024 AWP conference.

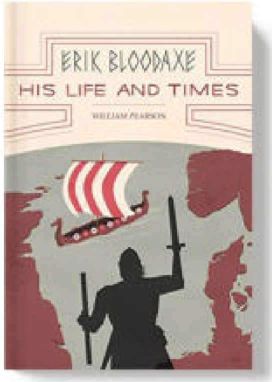
One of this program's unique features is its open submission period, the pilot program of which will run during the month of August. Submissions will be read by Belden, Polson, and Richards, with support from other advisers on the Scribner team. Though final details will be announced later this spring, the team will read up to 300 collections and respond to all submissions by the end of 2023. The intention of the open submission period, Richards explained, is to "eliminate some of the hurdles that poets can experience when seeking a publisher."

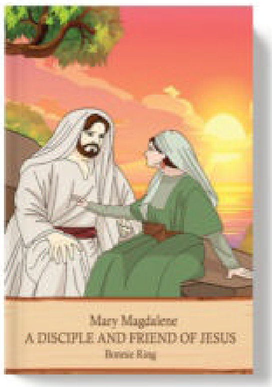
The trio dates the program's inception to when, last year, Simon & Schuster CEO Jonathan Karp suggested that "someone at the company should publish poetry." Belden said she found the mere suggestion "worthy of pause": "the CEO of a Big Five publishing company wants to ensure poetry is published—how extraordinary!" She volunteered, and with the support of Karp and Scribner publisher Nan Graham, Scribner's poetry program was born.

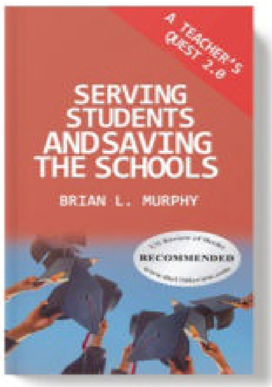
Before the team set to work, they researched how best to tailor the publishing process to poetry, presenting their findings to Scribner leadership. "We decided if we were going to publish poetry, we would need to educate ourselves and our colleagues about the ways that poetry is different than prose, from the design and production, to the more delicate process of editing and vigorous support through publication," Belden recalled. "How do you price poetry? What's the range of advances? What format, hardcover or paperback, is best for publication? Who are the few agents that represent poetry? How do you reach poets who are unrepresented? How do we effectively market and publicize poetry? How do we serve readers?"

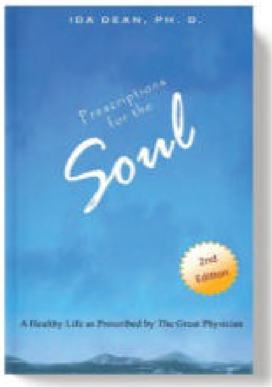
Richards called the program "a labor of love," but added that it also makes good business sense. "There's no shortage of talent in American poetry, and no shortage of readers," he added. "But there is a shortage of publishing opportunities."

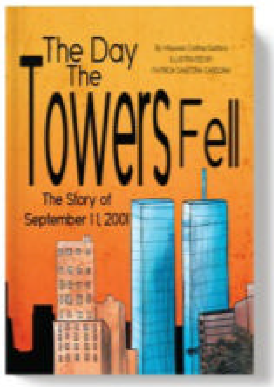
—Sophia Stewart

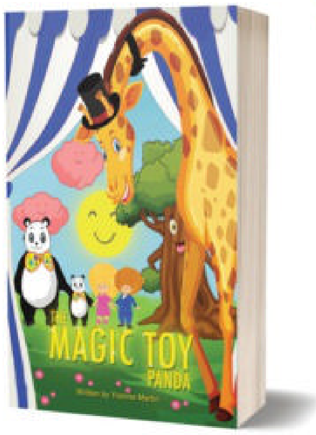











MAGIC TOY
PANDA
Written by Yvonne Martin

THE MAGIC TOY PANDA

Yvonne Martin

This book is about two little children finding a very old toy box full of exciting and wonderful and magical funny adventures. " All they have to do is make a wish but they must be very careful how quickly they make the wish."

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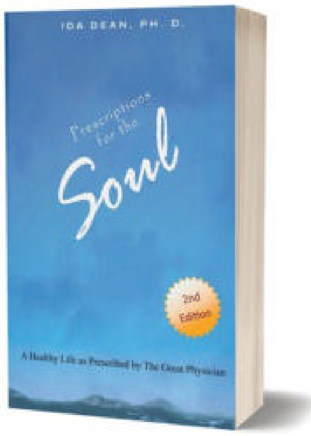
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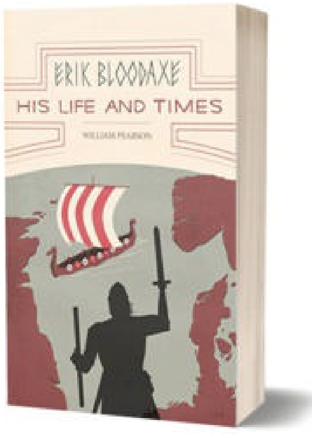
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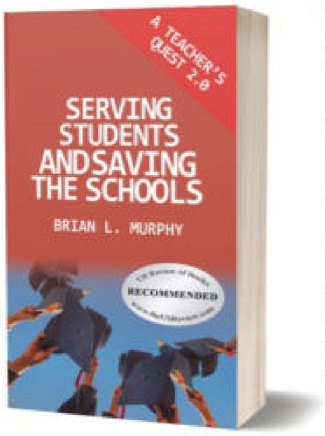
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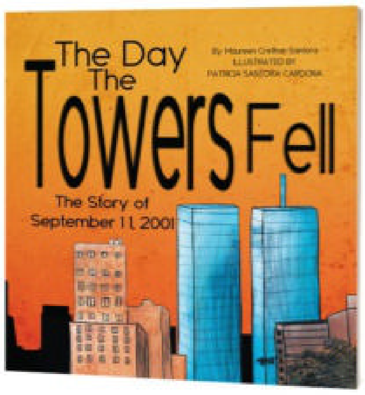
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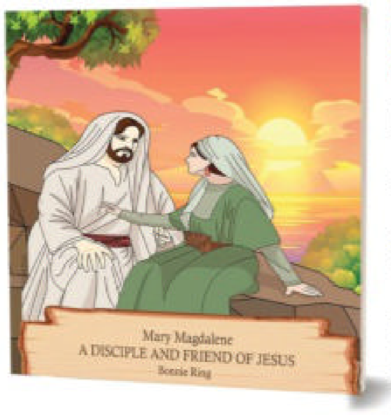
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Event Summary Sponsored by Westchester Publishing Services

Trying to Find the New Normal

The need for more standardization in production, ongoing collaboration between publishers and vendors, and continued flexibility in what is still a period of uncertainty were among the key takeaways offered by the speakers at the webinar “Best Practices for Publishing Books in a Changing Marketplace,” presented by *PW* with support from Westchester Publishing Services on March 23.

“In 2022, demand for books slowed somewhat,” said Jim Milliot, senior v-p and editorial director at *Publishers Weekly*, before introducing the panelists. BookScan reported that unit sales were down 6% in 2022 compared to 2021, and the Association of American Publishers’ preliminary figures showed that dollar sales were likewise down 6%. “The good news is that bookstore sales rose 6% in 2022,” Milliot said, adding that bookstore sales last year were almost 1% higher compared to 2019. BookScan executives also like to compare 2022 to the pre-pandemic time of 2019, Milliot said, noting that though units had slipped from 2021 to 2022, sales last year were still up 12% over 2019 levels. BookScan data for the first quarter of 2023 shows unit sales down less than 1% from 2022. So despite all the current uncertainty facing publishing and the overall economy, it doesn’t look like the sky is falling, Milliot said.

Matt Baehr

Matt Baehr, executive director at Book Manufacturers’ Institute, kicked off his remarks by also putting market conditions in early 2023 in context. He observed that BMI’s survey of members found that capacity and lead times for book manufacturers for hardcover and softcover printing have declined from the extreme highs of early 2022. In looking back over 2022, Baehr noted that publishers panicked because of supply chain problems and over ordered, which is likely the reason the printing crunch eased in late 2022, as publishers then cut orders to reduce inventory. With all the shifts in manufacturing that occurred during the pandemic, it is critical for publishers to have strong communication and partnerships with vendors, he advised. “If you had strong relationships [with suppliers], you were able to weather the supply chain storms,” Baehr said. The various shortages and challenges that occurred over the last two years made clear the need to build partnerships with multiple vendors, both stateside and internationally, he emphasized.

Stephen Driver, v-p of production services at Rowman & Littlefield, pointed to the importance of communication throughout the supply chain. “Communication is key,” he said. “We really found it’s helpful to plan ahead and talk to your vendors.” Another important lesson R&L learned, Driver said, was not to be tied to specific materials in designing books and to become more flexible about standardizing some production work. Though supply chain pressures have eased, there remains lots of question marks regarding the availability of certain materials—such as different types of paper—making it increasingly important for publishers to standardize their manufacturing requirements. “We’re big fans of standardization wherever possible,” Driver said, noting that if publishers standardize where they can, they’ll have the time to track down options on titles that would truly benefit from a unique design.

Stephen Driver

“Standardization is a good thing,” Baehr added. “It helps everyone, from mills onward, and will help ensure books are being printed and help prices even out and become steady.”

Many BMI members developed a plan B and in some cases a plan C during the pandemic to ensure they could have access to needed supplies, Baehr said. Driver said R&L developed alternative plans as well and was aware of the need to be flexible: “We had to react to changing forces in the marketplace and could no longer be wedded to one particular material or printing approach.”

“We are still feeling the effects of the last three years,” Kelly Gallagher, v-p of content acquisition at Ingram Content Group, pointed out in beginning his remarks. “We still have kinks in the system.” Though paper shortages have lessened and shipping container prices are down, there are still issues throughout the entire production pipeline, including ongoing transportation challenges and pricing pressure due to inflation. “Don’t assume the past challenges are behind us,” Gallagher warned.

Gallagher advised publishers that they shouldn’t return to a business-as-normal routine. He said that publishers that developed—and then implemented—new ways of working in response to the pandemic continue to fare better than those that didn’t. Many publishers adopted a digital print strategy to cope with the backlog at offset printers during the pandemic, and many are now using a hybrid model that incorporates the use of digital printing to meet demand when supply chain issues arise at offset printers or sales surge, Gallagher said. (He referred to a point last summer when Ingram’s Lightning Source service was providing most of the inventory for six of the top 10 bestsellers.)

Kelly Gallagher

“It’s helpful to plan ahead and talk to your vendors.
—Stephen Driver of Rowman & Littlefield

In another example of the need for publishers to develop a hybrid print strategy, Gallagher pointed to an internal survey Ingram conducted for one of the major publishers tracking how their books with active ISBNs were selling. Gallagher reported that 85% of titles sold 500 units or less yearly, while most others sold between 2,000 and 5,000 annually; all those titles, Gallagher suggested, are excellent candidates for print-on-demand or digital short-run printing. “We have to realize that the old model and metrics are broken,” Gallagher said. “Without hybrid strategies, we are in trouble.”

In addition to maintaining good relationships with printers, Gallagher said publishers should also develop strong relationships with retailers. He pointed out that while online sales softened in the year, independent bookstores enjoyed a generally good 2022. He also advised publishers to engage more with consumers by expanding their direct-to-consumer marketing efforts.

During the pandemic, many publishers turned to North American printers, and while some business has gone back overseas as costs have come down, speakers said they believe publishers will continue to adjust their printing strategies. “A lot of people learned that they need a distributed model where they have vendors available in the United States and that they needed to diversify their list of printers,” Baehr said.

Given all the questions surrounding doing business with China, publishers have been seeking partnerships with printers in other countries, not only in India but also in Mexico and even in Scandinavia. Driver wasn’t sure how much printing may return to the U.S., explaining that he sees adjustments “as more of a shift from one region to another.” Still, given the various unknowns, “offshore printing isn’t the slam dunk compared to onshore that it was a few years ago,” Driver said. In looking at overseas options, Driver stressed the need for working in multiple regions. “Don’t put your eggs all in one basket” he advised, but he noted that it is important for publishers to give their different printers enough projects to foster a working, productive partnership.

Another issue that was made worse by the pandemic and hasn’t been resolved yet is the scarcity of qualified people to work in printing plants, Baehr said. Even as manufacturers work to increase capacity, including by adding more automation, they still need workers to operate the machines. “Labor is still a big issue,” he said.

On the topic of prices, Gallagher said that while publishers’ costs went up in the past year, they were slow to raise book prices. He understands the reluctance by publishers, but said that testing different pricing strategies is a good way to see what prices the market will bear. Driver said R&L had raised prices on some titles and may raise prices on others depending on the market. “The price of everything has gone up; books shouldn’t be unique in this area,” Driver said, adding that he doesn’t believe publishers should devalue their content. He said publishers need to find a “sweet spot” where even if unit sales decline, the price increase will make the book more profitable.

The general consensus from the panelists was that it remains difficult to predict just how book sales will perform in the near term, and given that uncertainty, all industry players need to be agile enough to quickly react to changes in the marketplace.

—Michael Seidlinger

Bookselling Spotlight: The Neverending Bookshop

Accessibility concerns guide the layout and the book selections at the Neverending Bookshop, which is tucked into a mixed-retail complex in Edmonds, Wash. The community bookstore, which focuses on science fiction and fantasy, romance, and mystery, as well as on the children's and YA categories, is the project of Annie Carl, an outspoken advocate for diversity and positive representations of disabled individuals.

From l.: Annie Carl, her mother Nancy Tietje, and her sister Marie Tietje at the Neverending Bookshop

Carl chose the store's location for its accessible parking, ramps, and indoor openness. With a friend who uses a wheelchair, she measured the distance between nonmoving shelves to accommodate people who use mobility devices. Freestanding bookshelves in the middle of the store are on casters, ready to be rolled aside. Most books are arranged between chair height and a standing person's eye-level, keeping everything within arm's reach.

The Neverending Bookshop
Edmonds, Wash.
Founded: 2015
Employees: 1, plus family volunteers
Size: 1,200 sq. ft.
Titles in stock: 2,800 (70% new, 30% used)

"I thought about my mobility and applied that to the store," Carl explained. "Our nation builds a 'point of shame' into everything we do, and spaces are not built for people with disabilities." Having been frustrated by out-of-reach items and tripping hazards in other stores, she is considerate in her layout.

In *My Tropey Life: How Pop Culture Stereotypes Make Disabled Life Harder*, a 2020 zine from Microcosm Publishing, Carl wrote that she was born with lipomeningomyelocele, a rare spinal birth defect, which resulted in a lifelong series of surgeries and difficulty walking. She later survived non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, which caused hair loss and hydrocephalus.

"I have been in a wheelchair post-op, and I use walking sticks as mobility aids when I'm not home or here at the store," Carl said. "I think about not being able to get into places if they have four-inch steps without railings."

Carl was drawn to reading, writing, and bookselling, because "books have been my happy place since I was six or seven," she said. She remembers being an avid reader as a child, diving into escapist fiction to manage the trauma of health scares. She learned the book trade at the used shop Mr. B's Bookery (now Kingston Bookery) in her hometown of Kingston, Wash., and as a bookseller at Third Place Books Lake Forest Park, before establishing the Neverending Bookshop in Bothell, just north of Seattle, in 2015.

In 2018, Carl moved to the Edmonds location, where she is the sole proprietor. Her mother, Nancy Tietje, takes a weekend shift so Carl can spend time with her husband and elementary school–age child; Carl's sister Marie Tietje plans to volunteer at the shop, too. The store is open Wednesday through Sunday.

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The Weekly Scorecard

Print Unit Sales Up 4.7% in Easter Week

Unit sales of print books rose 4.7% in the week ended Apr. 8, 2023, over the comparable week in 2022, at outlets that report to Circana BookScan—helped by the fact that Easter fell a week earlier this year. Young adult fiction had the biggest increase, with sales up 17.2%. Laura Nowlin's *If He Had Been with Me* was #1 in the category, selling more than 18,000 copies. Elizabeth Lim's *When You Wish upon a Star* was in sixth place on the category list, selling more than 7,000 copies in its first week. YA nonfiction sales rose 11.6%, led by Scott Cawthon's *Five Nights at Freddy's Character Encyclopedia*, which sold about 4,600 copies. Children's fiction sales increased 16%. Dav Pilkey's *Twenty-Thousand Fleas Under the Sea (Dog Man #11)* stayed #1, selling almost 153,000 in its second week. A host of Easter titles followed the latest Dog Man installment, with *It's Not Easy Being a Bunny* by Marilyn Sadler in second place, selling nearly 37,000 copies. Children's nonfiction sales increased 9.2%, led by Roger Price's *Easter Eggstravaganza Mad Libs,* which sold just under 14,000 copies. Adult fiction sales inched up 0.2% last week. Colleen Hoover had six of the 10 category bestsellers, led by *It Starts with Us*, which sold nearly 30,000 copies. *Homecoming* by Kate Morton was the top new release, selling more than 15,000 copies. Sales fell 5.9% in adult nonfiction. Two new titles cracked the top 10 list: *Built to Move* by Kelly Starrett debuted in seventh place, selling almost 11,000 copies, while *Choosing to Run* by Des Linden hit #10, selling more than 9,000 copies.

TOTAL SALES OF PRINT BOOKS (IN THOUSANDS)

	APR. 9, 2022	APR. 8, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	14,972	15,670	4.7%	0.1%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	APR. 9, 2022	APR. 8, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	5,277	4,966	-5.9%	-3.7%
Adult Fiction	3,294	3,300	0.2%	6.4%
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,422	1,553	9.2%	-3.6%
Juvenile Fiction	4,273	4,898	16.0%	-0.2%
Young Adult Fiction	520	610	17.2%	2.6%
Young Adult Nonfiction	79	89	11.6%	-4.8%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	APR. 9, 2022	APR. 8, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	4,312	4,370	1.3%	-2.4%
Trade Paperback	8,374	8,698	3.9%	1.1%
Mass Market Paperback	640	530	-17.2%	-17.2%
Board Books	1,218	1,561	28.2%	8.9%

SOURCE: CIRCANA BOOKSCAN AND PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. BOOKSCAN'S U.S. CONSUMER MARKET PANEL COVERS APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE PRINT BOOK MARKET AND CONTINUES TO GROW.

When choosing titles, Carl refuses to stock reductive, feel-good narratives about bootstrapping. The Neverending Bookshop is not the place to find a memoir about triumphing over obstacles; Carl is wary of condescension. Instead, her shelves feature middle grade and teen reads like *Ellen Outside the Lines*, A.J. Sass's story of an autistic girl, and Jamie Sumner's *Roll with It*, about a young baker who uses a wheelchair. A social science and nonfiction section includes Devon Price's *Laziness Does Not Exist*, Tricia Hersey's *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto*, and Sara Hendren's *What Can a Body Do? How We Meet the Built World*.

A display inside the store.

In *My Tropey Life*, which describes how to identify positive representation and be an ally, Carl writes about "the historical devaluation of disabled people and their marginalization from the able-bodied world," and the need for awareness around accessibility in bookstores. She examines why narratives like *Avatar*, which promise freedom from disability, make her angry at best, depressed at worst. She also writes fiction, including the 2022 outer-space novella *Nebula Vibrations*, and edited the forthcoming anthology *Soul Jar: 31 Fantastical Tales by Disabled Authors* (Forest Avenue, Oct.).

The neighborhood shop has had "a rough year due to inflation and interest rates," Carl admitted, but she elevates her local profile by sponsoring Edmonds Heights Performing Arts children's theater, donating to the Seattle-based Gender Justice League, and offering a Libro.fm Golden Ticket promotion for a chance to win 12 audiobooks on Independent Bookstore Day, which is set for April 29 this year. (A Braille sign in her store directs visually impaired customers to Libro.fm.)

Reflecting on diversity and inclusion, Carl asserted that "my community has a long and bloody history—it's only in the past 100 years or so that we have been surviving past childhood"—and that the need is great for authentic representation. At the Neverending Bookstore and in bookselling spaces, Carl added, "I won't stop being loud."

—Nathalie op de Beeck

DEALS

By Rachel Deahl

DEAL OF THE WEEK

Knopf Wins Griner Memoir

Brittney Griner, the WNBA star who was arrested in Russia in February 2022 and held for 10 months, has signed with Knopf to write a memoir. **Kimberly Witherspoon** at InkWell Management, along with **Jon Liebman** at Brillstein Entertainment and **Lindsay Kagawa Colas** at Wasserman, sold world rights to **Reagan Arthur**, Knopf executive v-p and publisher. Jordan Pavlin, Knopf senior v-p and editor-in-chief, will edit the book, which will also have a cowriter. The heart of the memoir, Knopf said, will be Griner's account of "the personal turmoil she experienced during the near-10-month ordeal and the resilience that carried her through to the day of her return to the United States." The untitled memoir is slated for spring 2023, and a YA edition will be released later.

© EVAN MILLSTEIN

Griner

Amazon Buys Gerritsen's Martini

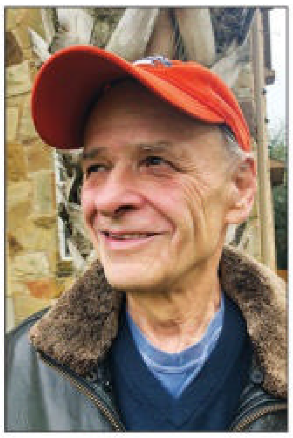
Gracie Doyle at Amazon Publishing's Thomas & Mercer imprint paid seven figures for North American rights to the first two books in bestselling author **Tess Gerritsen**'s The Martini Club series. In the first, titled *The Spy Coast*, "Maggie Bird, a retired CIA operative in small-town Maine, must tackle the ghosts of her past with the help of her local circle of old friends," the publisher said. **Meg Ruley** at the Jane Rotrosen Agency brokered the deal for Gerritsen. *The Spy Coast* will be released in October.

© JOSH GERRITSEN

Gerritsen

Mariner Signs New O'Brien Novel

In an unagented deal, **Tim O'Brien** sold world rights to his first novel in two decades to **Peter Hubbard** at Mariner Books. The publisher described *America Fantastica* as "a brilliant and rollicking odyssey in which a bank robbery by a disgraced journalist sparks a cross-country pursuit through a nation corroded by shameless delusion and deceit." O'Brien won a 1979 National Book Award for his novel *Going After Cacciato*, and his collection of linked short stories *The Things They Carried* has been a critical and commercial success since its release in 1990. *America Fantastica* is slated for October.



© TIMMY O'BRIEN

O'Brien

Berkley Goes 'Wild' for Neilson

Berkley executive editor **Amanda Bergeron** preempted North American rights to YA author **Riss M. Neilson**'s adult debut, *Wild in the Sun,* as well as a second, untitled novel for six figures. The author was represented by **Jess Regel** at Helm Literary. Bergeron described the novel as one that "follows lifelong best friends who spend one fateful summer exploring what might happen if they were to be something more." Berkley plans to publish *Wild in the Sun* as a trade paperback original in summer 2024.

© JADIN GAGNON

Neilson

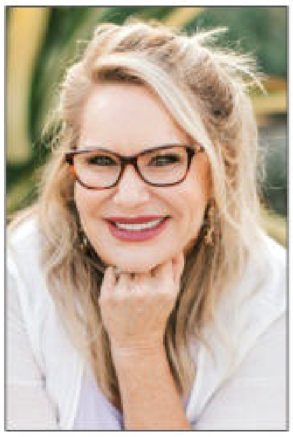
Random House Takes Cole's 'Tremor'

Teju Cole sold U.S. rights to his second novel, *Tremor*, to **Caitlin McKenna** at Random House. The publisher described the book as "a powerful, wide-ranging work of fiction that explores what constitutes a meaningful life in a violent world." In addition to the novel *Open City*, Cole has written two essay collections and the experimental photobook *Blind Spot*. He is currently a contributing writer to the *New York Times Magazine* and a professor of creative writing at Harvard. He was represented by **Andrew Wylie** at the Wylie Agency.

Cole

Grau Sells 'Life' to Hay House

Anna Cooperberg of Hay House acquired world English rights, at auction, to **Susan Grau**'s *Infinite Life, Infinite Lessons: Wisdom from the Spirit World on Living, Dying and the In-Between*. In the work, Grau, an intuitive medium and *Goop* regular, recounts a near-death experience she had as a child and shares spiritual lessons about life, the afterlife, and coping with the loss of loved ones. Grau was represented by **Linda Konner**, who has an eponymous agency.



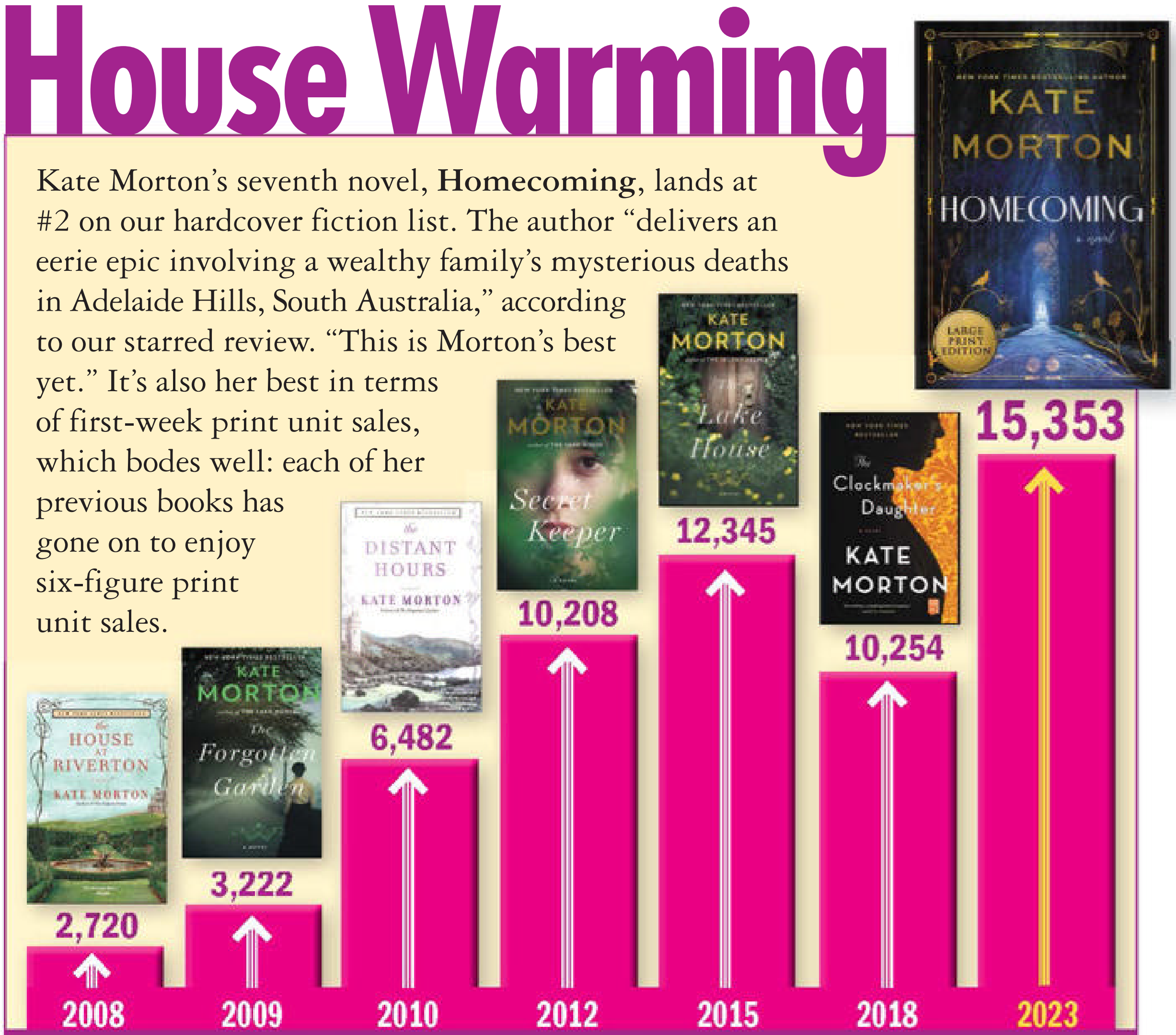
Grau

Behind the Bestsellers APR. 2–8, 2023

BY CAROLYN JURIS

House Warming

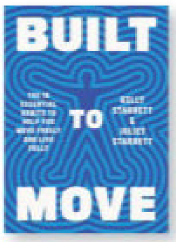
Kate Morton's seventh novel, **Homecoming**, lands at #2 on our hardcover fiction list. The author "delivers an eerie epic involving a wealthy family's mysterious deaths in Adelaide Hills, South Australia," according to our starred review. "This is Morton's best yet." It's also her best in terms of first-week print unit sales, which bodes well: each of her previous books has gone on to enjoy six-figure print unit sales.

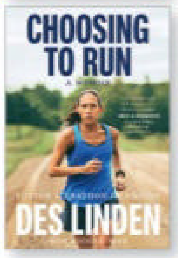


FIRST-WEEK PRINT UNIT SALES FOR KATE MORTON

THEY LIKE TO MOVE IT

A pair of new books on our hardcover nonfiction list make the case for putting down the phone and getting physical.

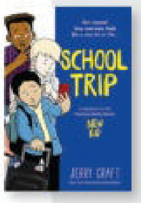




At #5, **Built to Move** by husband and wife Kelly and Juliet Starrett focuses on "how readers can achieve greater ease of movement and improve overall health," our review said. "Helpful illustrations demonstrate how to perform the exercises and the low intensity of the workouts will appeal to those intimidated by more demanding regimens."

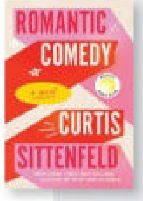
One notch below, **Choosing to Run** is, refreshingly, not a political stump-speech book but an inspirational memoir by two-time Olympian Des Linden, who in 2018 became the first American woman to win the Boston Marathon in more than three decades.

NEW & NOTABLE



SCHOOL TRIP
Jerry Craft
#5 Children's Fiction

"In this companion to Newbery winner *New Kid* and its sequel, *Class Act*, eighth grader Jordan Banks is excited about two things: his acceptance letter to the art school of his dreams, and traveling to Paris with his Riverdale Academy Day School classmates," per our starred review. "Craft offers a zestful graphic novel adventure that mixes lighthearted fare with thought-provoking observations."

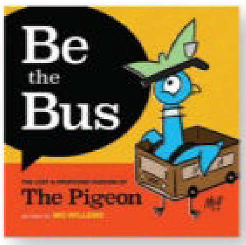


ROMANTIC COMEDY
Curtis Sittenfeld
#7 Hardcover Fiction

"The culture wars and political drama of Sittenfeld's best work are absent in her underwhelming latest, which follows a successful but insecure woman who catches the eye of a rock star," according to our review of the April Reese's Book Club pick. "There's some brilliant character work, but as Cinderella stories go, this doesn't quite stand out."

ALL PRINT UNIT SALES PER CIRCANA BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Flying the Coop



Children's book juggernaut Mo Willems, with his famed Pigeon character in tow, makes his adult debut with the illustrated humor title **Be the Bus**, #11 on our hardcover nonfiction list. Trading the feathered fussbudget's usual pastel palette for more vivid hues, Willems has the bratty bird dispense words of dubious wisdom: "It is better to give than to receive," he offers, then is quick to add, "Barely!" In a prepub interview with *PW*, Willems offered his thoughts on the enduring character: "I've worked with the Pigeon for 20 years and I've never been able to predict what he'll do next. Case in point, this book."

TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea** (Dog Man #11)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	152,650
2	**It's Not Easy Being a Bunny**	Sadler/Bollen	Random House	36,943
3	**Little Blue Truck's Springtime**	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	31,818
4	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	29,515
5	**It Ends with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	27,447
6	**How to Catch the Easter Bunny**	Wallace/Elkerton	Sourcebooks Wonderland	27,218
7	**Never Never**	Colleen Hoover	Canary Street	23,267
8	**Pete the Cat and the Easter Basket Bandit**	Dean/Dean	HarperFestival	21,954
9	**Hippity, Hoppity, Little Bunny**	–	Cottage Door	21,885
10	**Outlive**	Peter Attia	Harmony	21,629

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Adult Bestsellers | APR. 2–8, 2023

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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**Lessons in Chemistry**	Bonnie Garmus	Doubleday	9780385547345	17,506
2	–	**Homecoming**	Kate Morton	Mariner	9780063020894	15,353
3	4	**Hang the Moon**	Jeannette Walls	Scribner	9781501117299	12,933
4	8	**Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow**	Gabrielle Zevin	Knopf	9780593321201	9,989
5	3	**Hello Beautiful**	Ann Napolitano	Dial	9780593243732	9,916
6	5	**Countdown**	Patterson/DuBois	Little, Brown	9780316457378	9,656
7	–	**Romantic Comedy**	Curtis Sittenfeld	Random House	9780399590948	9,520
8	–	**Tress of the Emerald Sea**	Brandon Sanderson	Tor	9781250899651	9,446
9	7	**I Will Find You**	Harlan Coben	Grand Central	9781538748367	9,112
10	9	**Pineapple Street**	Jenny Jackson	Viking/Dorman	9780593490693	6,029
11	11	**Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Last Ronin**	Eastman/Laird et al.	IDW	9781684058419	5,948
12	12	**Demon Copperhead**	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780063251922	5,652
13	10	**Worthy Opponents**	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781984821805	5,527
14	2	**Loyalty**	Lisa Scottoline	Putnam	9780525539803	5,062
15	14	**Remarkably Bright Creatures**	Shelby Van Pelt	Ecco	9780063204157	4,989
16	13	**Storm Watch**	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331309	4,602
17	–	**Star Wars: The High Republic: Cataclysm**	Lydia Kang	Random House Worlds	9780593500354	4,216
18	18	**Fairy Tale**	Stephen King	Scribner	9781668002179	4,060
19	16	**Mad Honey**	Picoult/Boylan	Ballantine	9781984818386	3,926
20	15	**Someone Else's Shoes**	Jojo Moyes	Viking/Dorman	9781984879295	3,707

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**Outlive**	Peter Attia	Harmony	9780593236598	21,629
2	–	**The Wisdom of the Bullfrog**	William H. McRaven	Grand Central	9781538707944	20,697
3	3	**The Love Stories of the Bible Speak**	Shannon Bream	Broadside	9780063226050	13,229
4	2	**You're Going to Make It**	Lysa TerKeurst	Thomas Nelson	9781400239085	11,093
5	–	**Built to Move**	Starrett/Starrett	Knopf	9780593534809	10,888
6	–	**Choosing to Run**	Des Linden	Dutton	9780593186640	9,368
7	10	**I'm Glad My Mom Died**	Jennette McCurdy	Simon & Schuster	9781982185824	9,183
8	–	**Got Your Number**	Mike Greenberg	Hyperion Avenue	9781368073561	8,390
9	7	**Spare**	Prince Harry	Random House	9780593593806	7,816
10	9	**The Creative Act**	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	9780593652886	7,601
11	–	**Be the Bus**	Mo Willems	Union Square	9781454948193	7,316
12	8	**Poverty, by America**	Matthew Desmond	Crown	9780593239919	6,391
13	–	**The Met Flex Diet**	Ian K. Smith	Harvest	9780063289826	6,003
14	–	**The Return of the Gods**	Jonathan Cahn	Frontline	9781636411422	5,936
15	4	**Sweet Enough**	Alison Roman	Clarkson Potter	9781984826398	5,065
16	–	**Follow Me to Hell**	Tom Clavin	St. Martin's	9781250214553	4,913
17	16	**8 Rules of Love**	Jay Shetty	Simon & Schuster	9781982183066	4,394
18	–	**Wonderhell**	Laura Gassner Otting	Ideapress	9781646871223	4,279
19	30	**Walk the Blue Line**	Patterson/Eversmann	Little, Brown	9780316406604	4,241
20	15	**Young Forever**	Mark Hyman	Little, Brown Spark	9780316453189	4,055

LW: rank last week

Adult Bestsellers | APR. 2–8, 2023

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Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	11	Two Alone	Sandra Brown	Mira	9780778334446	4,745
2	12	Suspects	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821706	4,662
3	6	Rich Dad Poor Dad	Robert T. Kiyosaki	Plata	9781612681139	4,433
4	19	The Russian	Patterson/Born	Grand Central	9781538703588	4,392
5	18	The Jensens of Colorado	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786050130	4,095
6	15	Save It for Sunday	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786049578	3,809
7	33	Legacy	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	9781250775009	3,396
8	17	Death of the Black Widow	Patterson/Barker	Grand Central	9781538753088	3,066
9	1	Shielding the Baby	Laura Scott	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587626	2,820
10	37	Wrangling the Rancher	Diana Palmer	Harlequin	9781335498557	2,489
11	26	Mercy	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538719718	2,484
12	29	Tom Clancy: Zero Hour	Don Bentley	Berkley	9780593422748	2,378
13	28	Getting Even	Lisa Jackson	Zebra	9781420155549	2,326
14	40	Ready for Marriage	Debbie Macomber	Harlequin	9781335498410	2,311
15	2	Forever	J.R. Ward	Pocket	9781982180201	2,265
16	4	Rescued by the Rancher	Barb Han	Harlequin Intrigue	9781335582539	2,253
17	5	Pinecraft Refuge	Lenora Worth	Love Inspired	9781335585608	2,149
18	10	Wyoming Cold Case Secrets	Sommer Smith	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587671	2,133
19	31	Then You Came Along	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778386131	2,124
20	9	Targeted in the Desert	Dana Mentink	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587640	2,118

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	It Starts with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	29,515
2	2	Never Never	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	9781335004888	23,267
3	4	The Last Thing He Told Me	Laura Dave	S&S/Rucci	9781501171352	18,602
4	3	Heart Bones	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021910	18,361
5	9	Icebreaker	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026038	12,597
6	–	One Piece, Vol. 102	Eiichiro Oda	Viz	9781974736553	12,065
7	7	Twisted Love	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274867	11,929
8	6	Things We Hide from the Light	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781728276113	10,954
9	5	The Four Winds	Kristin Hannah	Griffin	9781250178619	10,322
10	8	Crying in H Mart	Michelle Zauner	Vintage	9781984898951	9,002
11	12	The Housemaid	Freida McFadden	Grand Central	9781538742570	8,787
12	11	One Italian Summer	Rebecca Serle	Atria	9781982166809	8,526
13	21	The It Girl	Ruth Ware	Scout	9781982155278	8,522
14	17	Twisted Games	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274874	7,120
15	14	The Last to Vanish	Megan Miranda	S&S/Rucci	9781982147327	6,921
16	13	The Paris Apartment	Lucy Foley	Morrow	9780063003064	6,721
17	18	Overkill	Sandra Brown	Grand Central	9781538751992	6,401
18	–	The Summer Place	Jennifer Weiner	Washington Square	9781501133589	6,334
19	19	A Court of Silver Flames	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635577990	6,239
20	10	Spy X Family, Vol. 9	Tatsuya Endo	Viz	9781974736287	6,083

LW: rank last week

Children's Bestsellers | APR. 2–8, 2023

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Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea** (Dog Man #11)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801910	152,650
2	**Diper Överlöde** (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #17)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419762949	13,480
3	**Collaborations** (Cat Kid Comic Club #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338846621	13,440
4	**Mary Anne's Bad Luck Mystery** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #13)	Martin/Cheng	Graphix	9781338616101	8,859
5	**School Trip**	Jerry Craft	Quill Tree	9780062885531	7,694
6	**Moon Rising** (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #6)	Sutherland/Holmes	Graphix	9781338730890	7,337
7	**When You Wish upon a Star** (Twisted Tale #14)	Elizabeth Lim	Disney-Hyperion	9781368077545	7,137
8	**Warriors: A Starless Clan #3: Shadow**	Erin Hunter	HarperCollins	9780063050211	6,500
9	**On Purpose** (Cat Kid Comic Club #3)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801941	6,469
10	**The Adventures of Captain Underpants** (anniv. ed.)	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	9781338865394	6,464
11	**Super King Viking Land!** (Press Start! #13)	Thomas Flintham	Scholastic	9781338828757	6,224
12	**The Island**	Natasha Preston	Delacorte	9780593481493	6,125
13	**As Good as Dead**	Holly Jackson	Ember	9780593379882	5,649
14	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #2)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792706	5,453
15	**One of Us Is Lying**	Karen M. McManus	Delacorte	9781524714758	5,306
16	**Better Than the Movies**	Lynn Painter	Simon & Schuster	9781534467637	5,066
17	**Pug's New Puppy** (Diary of a Pug #8)	Kyla May	Scholastic	9781338713534	4,967
18	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #1)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792676	4,846
19	**Welcome to Sparklegrove** (Unicorn Diaries #8)	Rebecca Elliott	Scholastic	9781338745658	4,747
20	**Kill Joy**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593426210	4,561
21	**Spy Camp: The Graphic Novel**	Stuart Gibbs	Simon & Schuster	9781534499379	4,513
22	**Karen's Birthday** (Baby-Sitters Little Sister Graphic Novel #6)	Martin/Farina	Graphix	9781338762587	4,148
23	**Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret** (media tie-in)	Judy Blume	Atheneum	9781665921312	4,019
24	**Jessi's Secret Language** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #12)	Martin/Chau	Graphix	9781338616071	3,955
25	**The Hawthorne Legacy**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316105187	3,560

Children's Picture Books

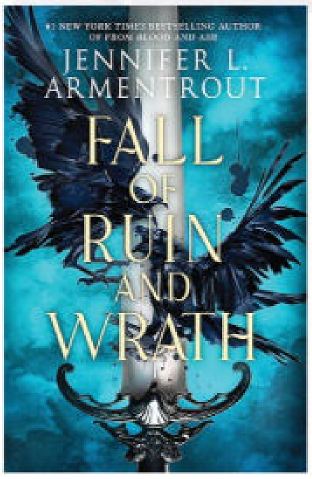
RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**It's Not Easy Being a Bunny**	Sadler/Bollen	Random House	9780394861029	36,943
2	**Little Blue Truck's Springtime**	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	9780544938090	31,818
3	**How to Catch the Easter Bunny**	Wallace/Elkerton	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781492638179	27,218
4	**Pete the Cat and the Easter Basket Bandit**	Dean/Dean	HarperFestival	9780062868374	21,954
5	**Hippity, Hoppity, Little Bunny**	–	Cottage Door	9781680524772	21,885
6	**Biscuit's Pet & Play Easter**	Capucilli/Schories	HarperFestival	9780061128394	20,783
7	**Guess How Much I Love You**	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9781536210637	18,541
8	**Somebunny Loves You**	Rossner/Gibson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728223438	18,506
9	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	17,954
10	**One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800134	17,224
11	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	16,904
12	**Happy Easter, Mouse!**	Numeroff/Bond	HarperFestival	9780694014224	16,168
13	**Llama Llama Easter Egg**	Anna Dewdney	Viking	9780451469823	16,024
14	**Green Eggs and Ham**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800165	16,020
15	**It's Better Being a Bunny**	Sadler/Bollen	Random House	9780593434703	15,950
16	**Oh, the Places You'll Go!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	15,443
17	**Construction Site: Spring Delight**	Rinker/Ford	Chronicle	9781797204314	13,463
18	**Pete the Cat: Big Easter Adventure**	Dean/Dean	HarperFestival	9780062198679	12,228
19	**You're My Little Cuddle Bug**	Edwards/Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684122585	11,828
20	**The Cat in the Hat**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800011	11,661
21	**Never Touch a Grumpy Bunny!**	Greening/Lynch	Make Believe	9781800582682	11,173
22	**I Love You Like No Otter**	Rossner/Hanson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728213743	10,856
23	**Dr. Seuss's ABC**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800301	10,750
24	**Babies Love Easter**	R.I. Redd	Cottage Door	9781680522860	10,681
25	**I Love You to the Moon and Back**	Hepworth/Warnes	Tiger Tales	9781589255517	10,609

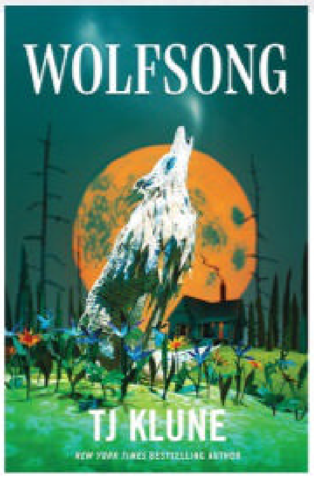
Love in the Time of Dragons

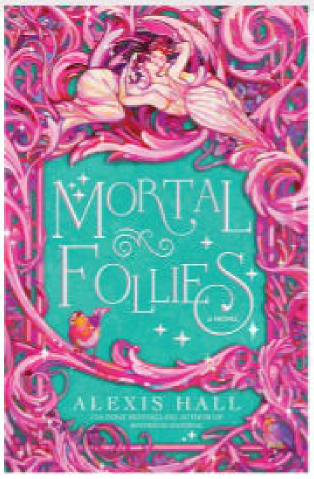
Romantasy satisfies world-weary readers' need for escapism with complex, emotional stories

By Vivian Nguyen

Romantic fantasy, increasingly marketed as "romantasy," pairs the idealism of romance with the surrealism of fantasy, giving readers a break from dire headlines and humdrum daily life. "One real big draw of fantasy is exploring these other worlds where you can ride a dragon, wave a wand, and suddenly, there's a nighttime of stars above you," says Liz Pelletier, CEO and publisher at Entangled Publishing. "What would the world be like with a little magic?" *PW* spoke with editors about how romantasy authors are giving their readers that magic.

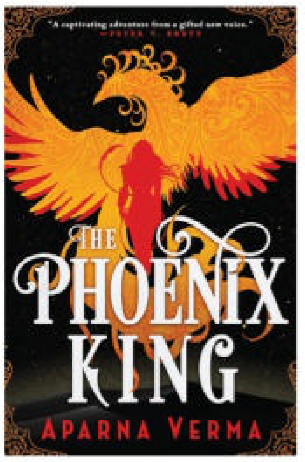






When Aragorn met Elizabeth Bennet

The best romance stories portray all the joys and complexities of lovers learning to navigate their lives and emotions together, and romantasy offers fertile ground to explore that complexity against the backdrop of an imagined world that operates by its own rules. Aparna Verma's *The Phoenix King* (Orbit, Aug.) features an enemies-to-lovers romance between an heir who is hiding a terrible secret that could threaten her ascension to the throne and an untrustworthy former assassin assigned to her guard. "You're bringing in a lot of complex worldbuilding that layers into why they're enemies in the first place, which informs their romance," says Orbit senior editor Priyanka Krishnan. "It just interconnects very nicely."


"A captivating adventure from a gifted new voice." —PETER V. BRETT
THE PHOENIX KING
APARNA VERMA

A courtesan meets a prince with an insatiable hunger for mortal experiences in Jennifer L. Armentrout's *Fall of Ruin and Wrath*, a September release from Tor's Bramble imprint. For Ali Fisher, executive editor at Tor, the magic in Armentrout's world feeds directly into the couple's relationship and fuels their growing connection. Another Tor release, T.J. Klune's *Wolfsong* (July; originally published by Dreamspinner in 2016), involves a friends-to-lovers romance between a human and werewolf; the characters' abilities to shape-shift adds a dimension to their love story. "Something that really works between these two genres is the idea of coming into a whole new world with entirely different social rules that go with various forms of magic," Fisher says.

Adding romance to a fantasy story helps the world feel more familiar to readers, even when that world runs on magic and is populated by werewolves or elves. "No matter how fantastical or speculative or strange the situation, it's the relationships that anchor the core of those stories that make them shine," says Sarah Peed, senior editor at Del Rey. Peed edited Alexis Hall's *Mortal Follies* (June), which *PW*'s starred review called "a fresh and delightful addition to the queer romance canon." In "a magic-infused Regency England," a noblewoman enlists the help of an alleged witch to rid herself of a curse.

EPIC FANTASY • ALTERNATE HISTORY • HARD SF
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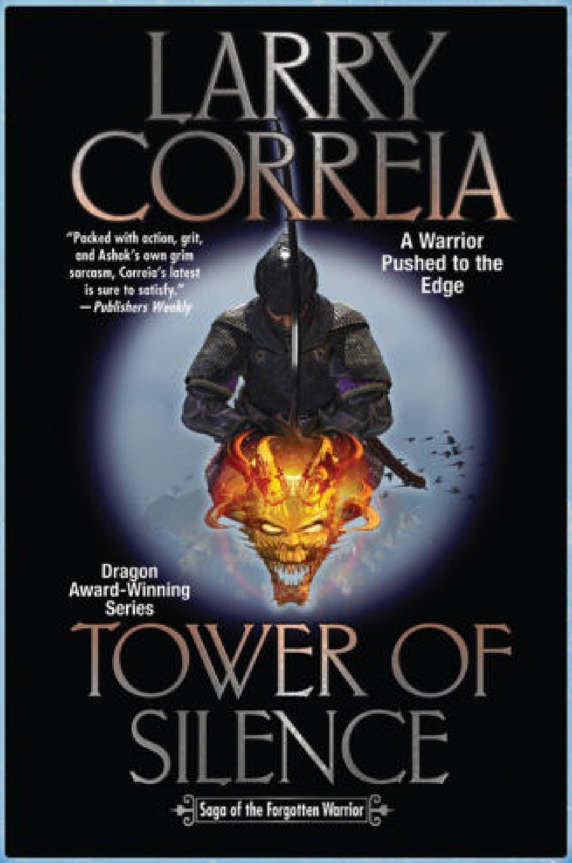
WAR RAGES AS THE GREAT EXTERMINATION SPREADS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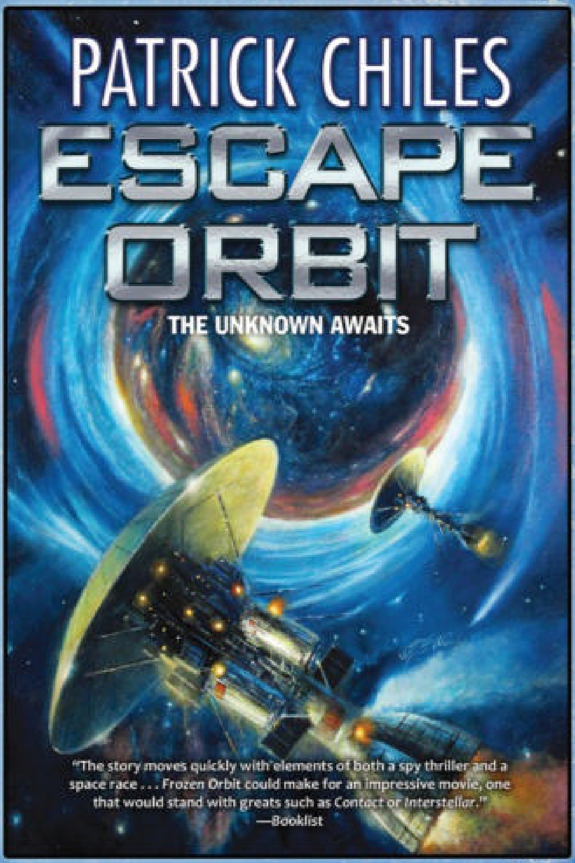
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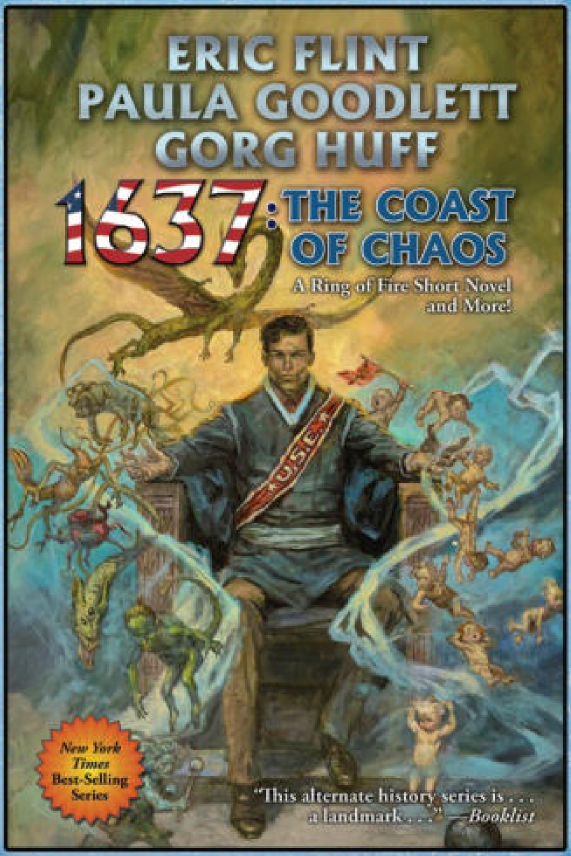
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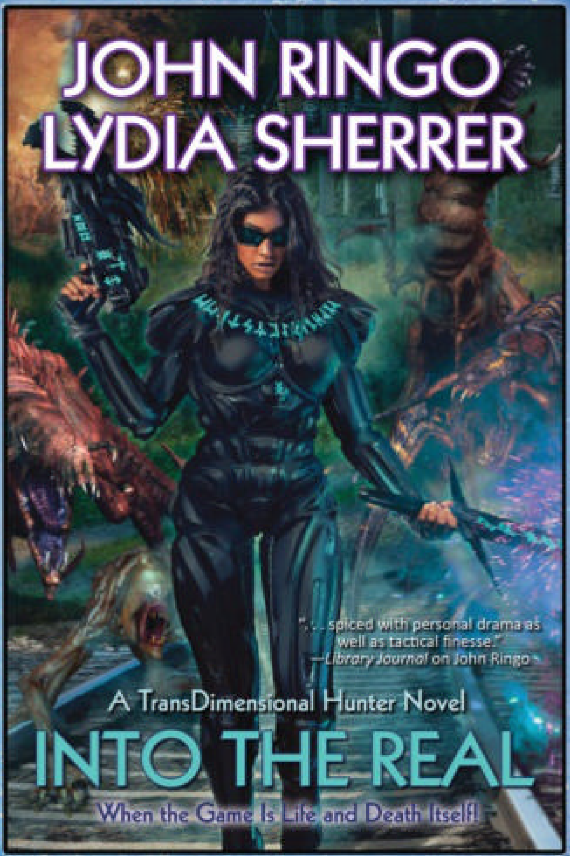
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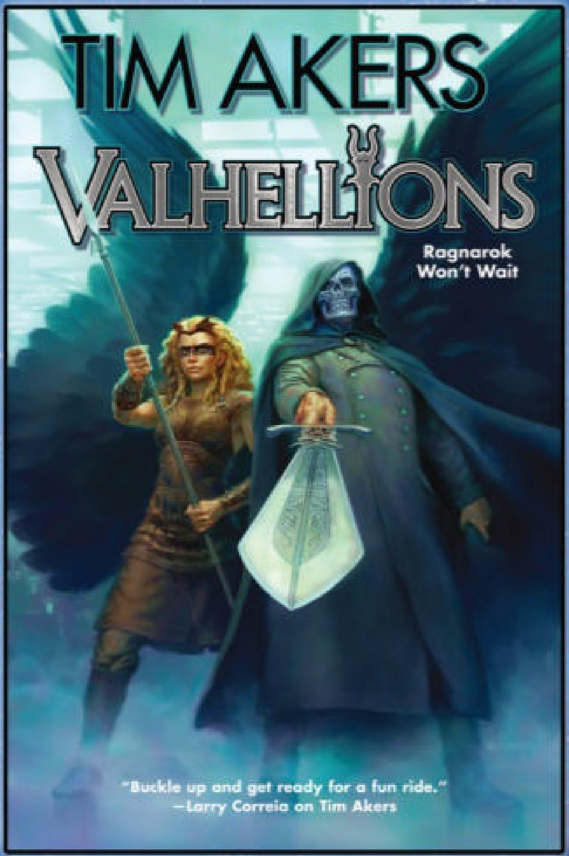
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"Dragons have never been so sexy."
—Kate Dylan, author of *Mindwalker*

"Tight, tense, smoldering, and wonderfully queer."
—Mike Brooks, author of The God-King Chronicles

DRAGONFALL
L. R. LAM

DAW

It's Not Easy Being Greenwashed

PW talks with Sim Kern

Sim Kern calls their full-length adult debut, *The Free People's Village* (Levine Querido, Aug.), a tale of "coming of age in protest spaces." Against the backdrop of an alternate 2020 U.S. embroiled in an eco-friendly "War on Climate Change," a queer punk band gets swept up into an activist movement to save a Houston neighborhood from gentrification. Kern spoke with *PW* about the intersections of art and activism.

Why climate fiction?

I set out in college to major in environmental science. I was this passionate environmentalist teen, back in the days before *An Inconvenient Truth*, when most adults I knew thought global warming was as big a concern as Bigfoot sightings. But I didn't have the disposition for scientific research. I wound up teaching English and chaperoning the school's environmental club, but otherwise feeling frustrated that I wasn't making a more direct impact. That's when I started work on my YA debut, *Seeds for the Swarm*. The climate crisis always features heavily in my writing, because that's the background of our times, isn't it? I can't imagine a day in which I don't experience some amount of existential dread about the future

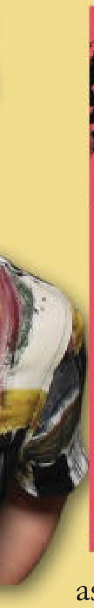
What inspired the alternate timeline?

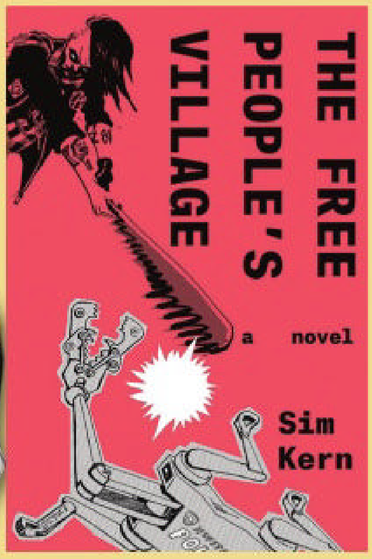
I got the idea in 2020, when leftists were getting so much messaging saying "you just have to vote." "Vote for Biden and the climate crisis and police violence will be solved." So I thought: What if we took the Democrats at their word? What if Democrats had held a supermajority since the Clinton administration? How would society be different? Based on what I've seen from the Democratic party, I think you'd see a

We found love in a magic place

NATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE WITCH'S HEART
GENEVIEVE GORNICHEC
A NOVEL
The Weaver and the Witch Queen

The pandemic has increased the demand for new realities and new worlds, editors say, as readers search for relief from their trauma and stress. "We've seen so many readers who feel the need for escapism in the last three years," says Jessica Wade, executive editor at Ace. Wade acquired Genevieve Gornichec's *The Weaver and the Witch Queen* (July), a historical fantasy set in the 10th century that follows a witch who eventually becomes the queen of Norway and her child-





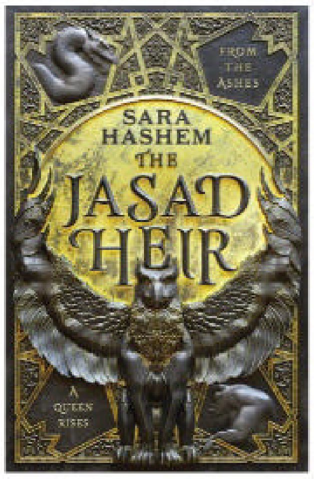
lot of hollow promises and surface-level changes like the greenwashing in this book.

I was also writing from a place of grief after watching the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor protests be so brutally crushed by police violence. How do you keep going when the best people you knew put everything on the line for this movement and it was crushed? I wanted to explore how you move forward as an organizer and as a person who hopes for a better world.

How did you approach the theme of community?
It's kind of the intersection of two communities. When I was in my early 20s, I was doing activism with Occupy Houston, but I was also in a band. There was a beautiful creative anarchy to some of these band houses but also a lot of self-destructive behavior and substance abuse. It was interesting to explore that punk world coming into contact with a Black-led organizing movement. How do those two communities coalesce and find a way to live together, and how is everyone transformed in that process?

What is narrator Maddie's relationship to race?
Black activists often talk about how they can't forget about being Black; their experience of moving through the world is constantly racialized. Only white people have the privilege to say, "Oh, I'm color-blind." And I think you see that reproduced in books by white authors even when they're writing about racial justice. White characters will interact with characters of color without any self-awareness. I wanted to have this narrator who's very self-conscious of her whiteness and learning about her complicity in oppressive systems and learning how to be not just a performative ally but a true comrade to the racial justice movement.

—Phoebe Cramer



hood friend, who embarks upon a journey to save her sister after she's kidnapped by Viking raiders.

Readers who are weighed down by their current realities are looking for a little hope, and the inherently hopeful nature of romance can break up the tension of fantasy stories' high-stakes plots. "There's been such an outcry and need for something that just feels warmer, softer, and lovely," says Nivia

"A sweeping adventure across time, space, and perhaps realms of existence. This is godpunk, done with style."
–P. Djèlí Clark, author of
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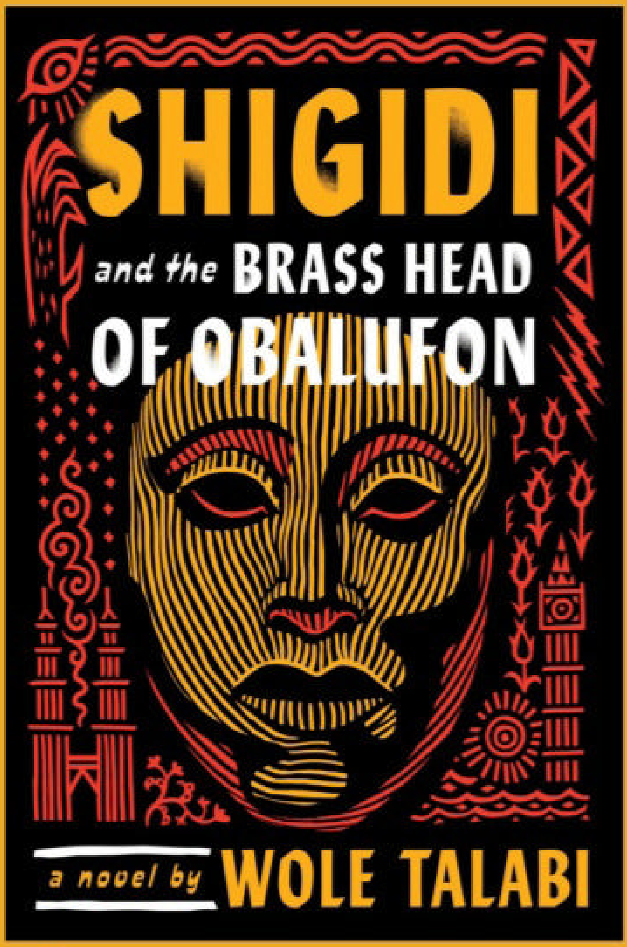
–T. L. Huchu, author of
The Library of the Dead



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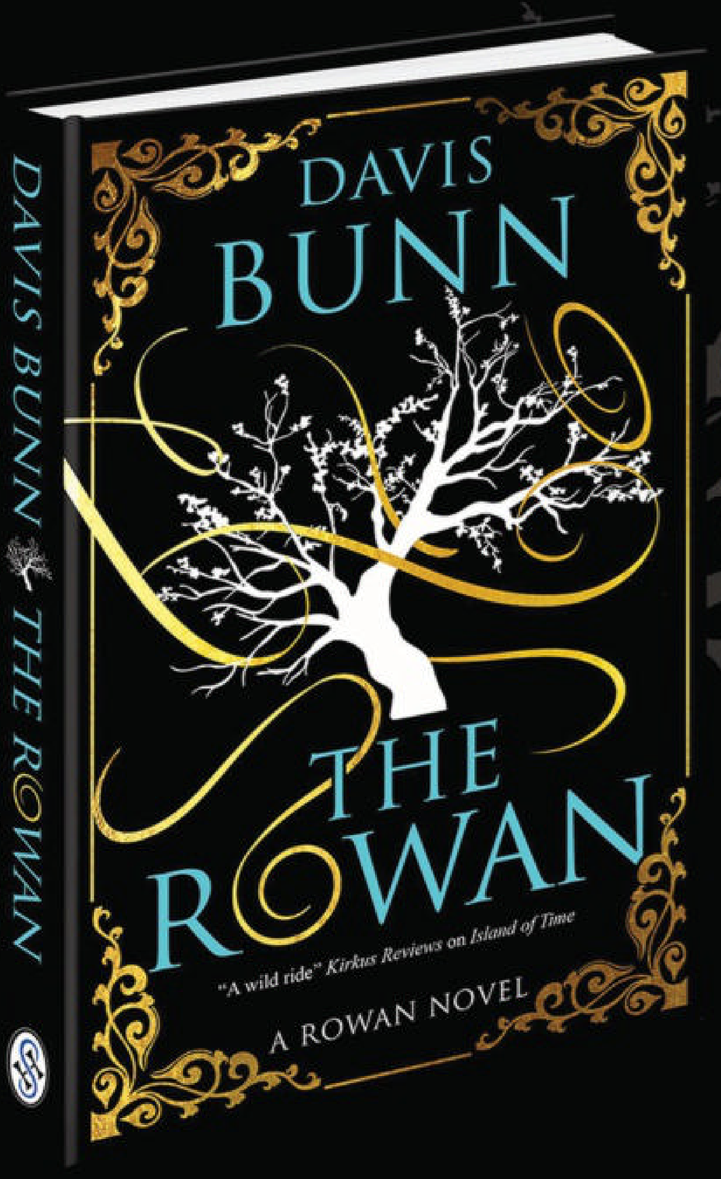

COMING JULY 4, 2023

HC | 9781448311125

SEVERN HOUSE

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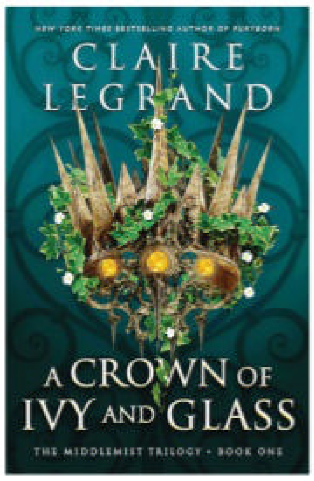
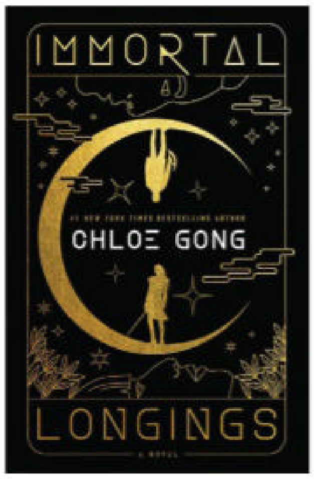
Evans, senior editor at Orbit, who acquired Sara Hashem's *The Jasad Heir* (July), an Egyptian-inspired fantasy about a queen on the run who strikes a deal with her enemy's heir in exchange for her life.

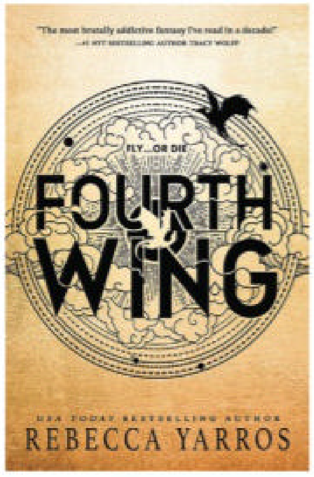


Claire Legrand's *A Crown of Ivy and Glass*, a May release from Sourcebooks Casablanca, follows a young socialite with a physical intolerance to magic who is seeking a way to ruin her family's rival and strikes a deal with a man trying to redeem himself after his parents were compelled by a demon. "It's another layer of escapism, which is something that I look for in books as a reader, and I think others are looking for as well," says Sourcebooks senior editor Annie Berger.

Just the way you are



Saga senior editor Amara Hosijo points out how the magic system in Chloe Gong's *Immortal Longings* (July) challenges readers to think about their identity and what makes them who they are. In this *Antony and Cleopatra*–inspired tale, the characters can jump into any body of their choosing, so looks aren't a factor in the romance. "I continue to think about the ways that physical appearance and title and authority are conflated and how they play a role in love," Hosijo says. *PW*'s starred review praised Gong for the way she "probes her characters' sense of identity in her wonderfully high-concept adult fantasy."



Entangled's Pelletier agrees that identity is an essential part of romantasy. The Entangled imprint Red Tower will publish Rebecca Yarros's *Fourth Wing* in May, which *PW*'s starred review described as an "epic tale of a reluctant dragon rider's coming-of-age with a sexy dark academia aesthetic." Pelletier observes that one of the hallmarks of a good love story is one character seeing something innately lovable in another that no one else sees. "Sometimes you don't even know you're special at the beginning," she says, "and then you find out that you were always extraordinary."

And they lived happily ever after

The outlook for romantasy's longevity looks bright, as the subgenre uniquely sets the stage for boundless relationship development over the course of a multi-book series—a

continued on p. 28

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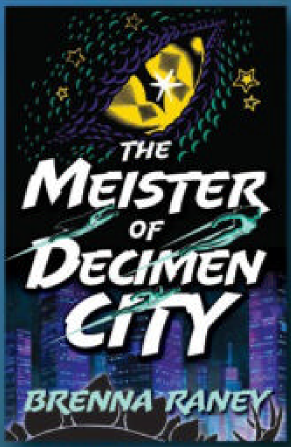
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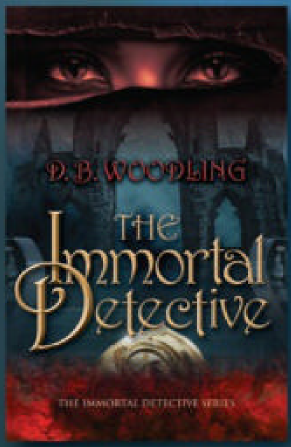
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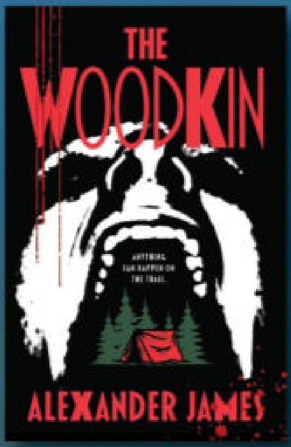
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ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN ON THE TRAIL.
ALEXANDER JAMES

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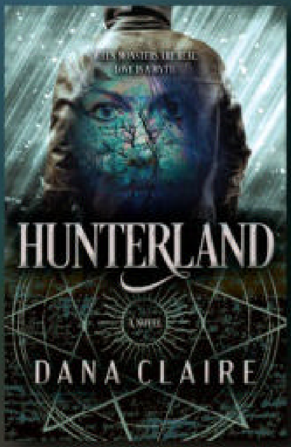
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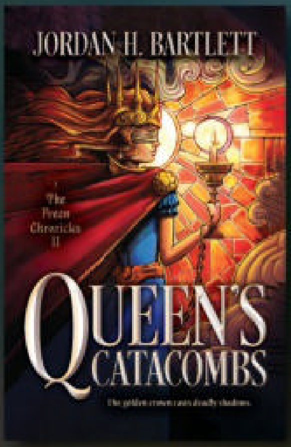
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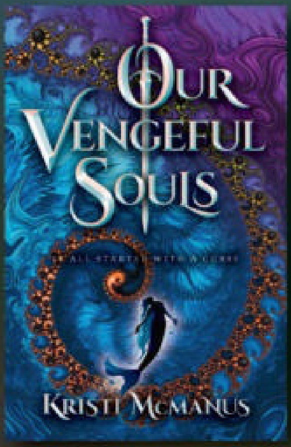
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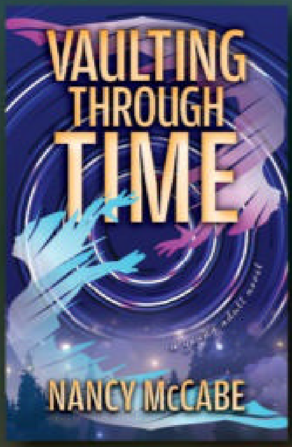
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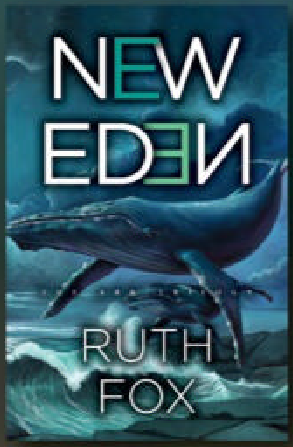
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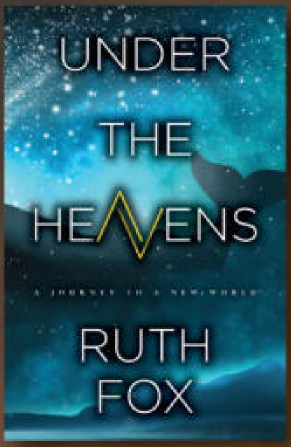
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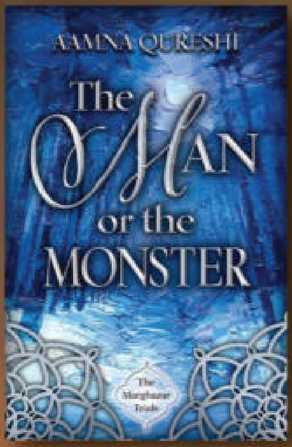
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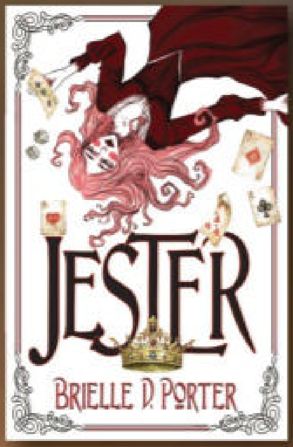
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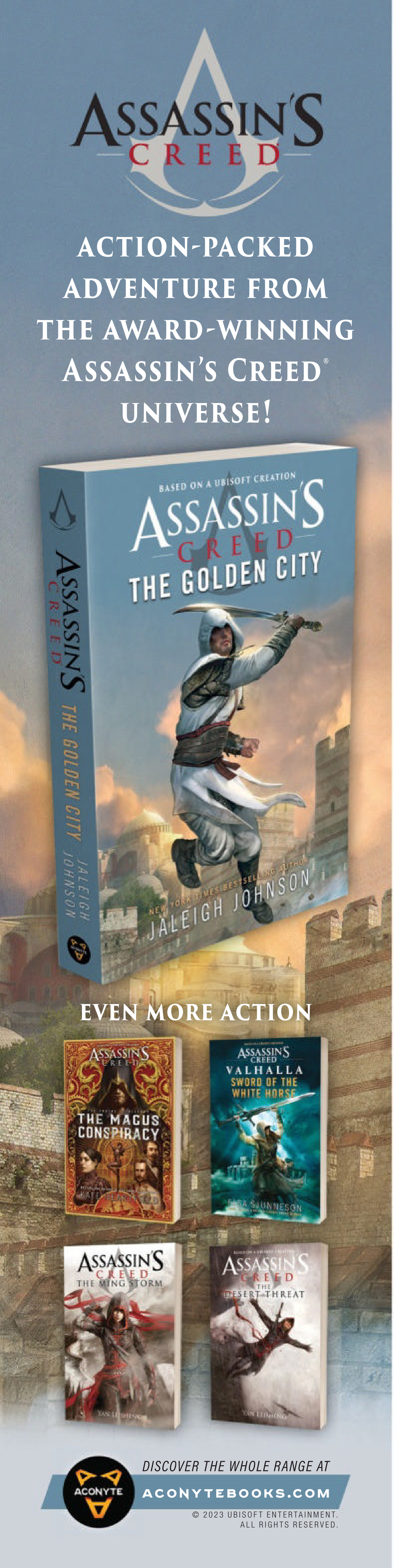
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Ghosts in the Machine

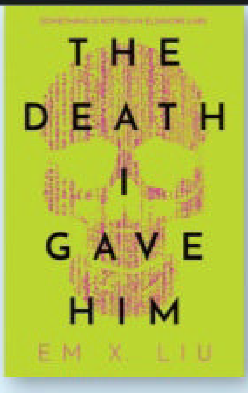
New science fiction grapples with artificial intelligence

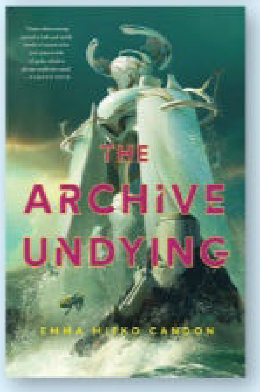
With ChatGPT and other advances in artificial intelligence making daily headlines, it's only natural that speculative fiction writers are tapping into the technology's exciting—and daunting—possibilities. "Incorporating AI into fiction is a way to reflect on the human experience," says Em X. Liu, debut author of *The Death I Gave Him* (Solaris, Sept.). "How do we define personhood once AI has its own drives and motivations?" *PW* spoke with sci-fi authors about how their upcoming novels reimagine AI's place in fiction.

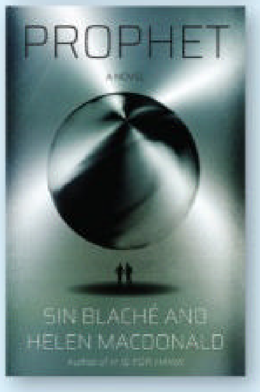
On the fritz

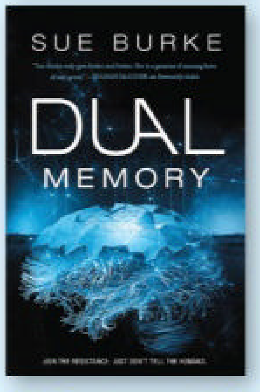
Artificial brains, some authors suggest, are just as fallible as human ones. In Emma Mieko Candon's *The Archive Undying* (June, Tordotcom), which features "fresh, vivid worldbuilding," per *PW*'s review, machine gods go mad and level entire cities. "These feral robots' selfhood has been shattered," Candon says. "Their mental break just obliterates their ability to do anything but follow these loops that they're stuck in."

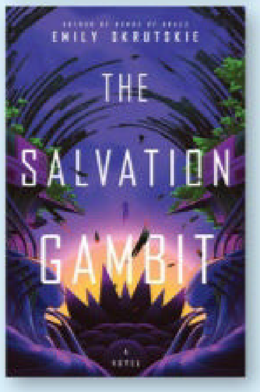
In Sin Blaché's and Helen Macdonald's *Prophet* (Grove, Aug.), a mysterious goo called Prophet lures victims to their doom by physically manifesting their fondest memories. As human memories are often fractured, so too are Prophet's creations (a diner without bathrooms, a horse with a human heart), say Blaché and Macdonald, who see Prophet as akin to generative AI making art: an inhuman agent taking human representations and making something deeply unsettling from them.


THE DEATH I GAVE HIM
EM X. LIU


THE ARCHIVE UNDYING
EMMA MIEKO CANDON


PROPHET
A NOVEL
SIN BLACHÉ AND HELEN MACDONALD


SUE BURKE
DUAL MEMORY


EMILY SKRUTSKIE
THE SALVATION GAMBIT
A NOVEL

Scanning for stable connections

Some authors are exploring the complexities of intra-AI dynamics. In Sue Burke's *Dual Memory* (Tor, May)—a "clever near-future adventure," per *PW*'s review—a wily AI named Par Augustus bands together with robotic buildings and even mechanical toys to keep himself safe from humans who might misuse him. "What humans want is to survive, and so do machines," Burke says. "If you accept Asimov's three laws, the machine should not let itself be injured. So how will they work together if they're in danger?"

The lumbering machine gods of Candon's *The Archive Undying* have complex internal concepts of faith and belief. "There is a religion in this world that precedes robots, and these robots have their own version of religious devotion," Candon says. "But they are not people, and to be like people is heretical to them."

I'm sorry Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that

Some science fiction authors play with AI's potential to observe every aspect of our lives. In *The Salvation Gambit* (Del Rey, Sept.), Emily Skrutskie explores the terrifying prospect of artificial intelligence deliberately turning against

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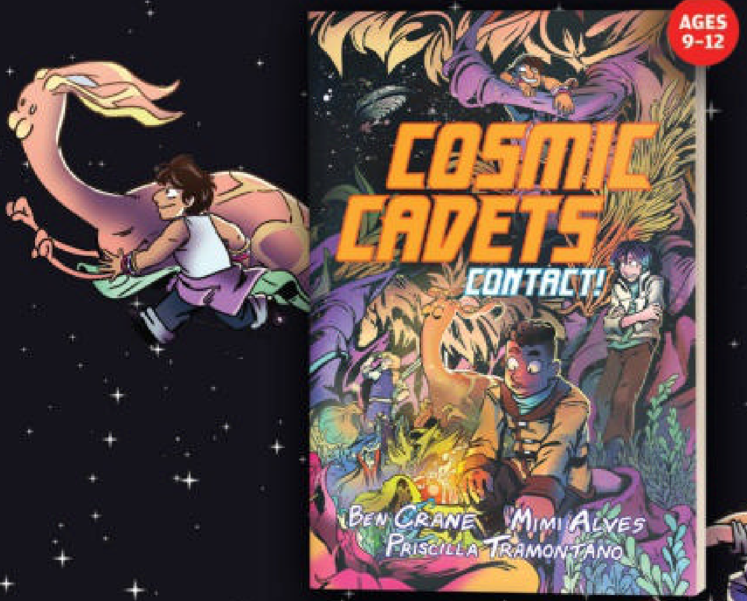
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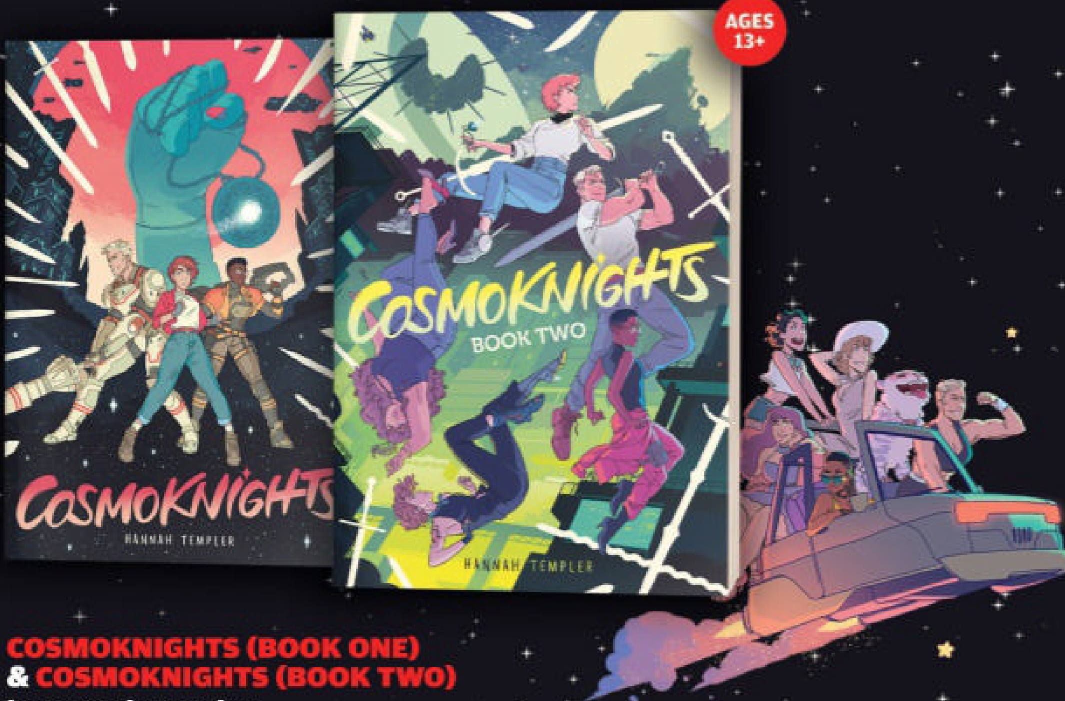
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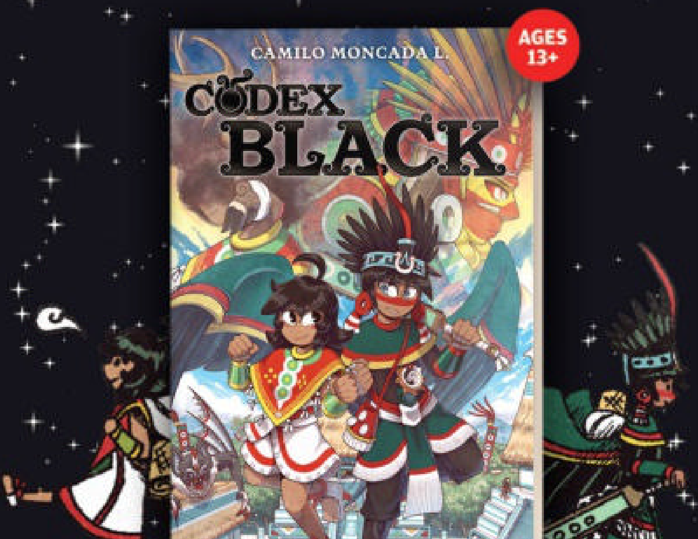
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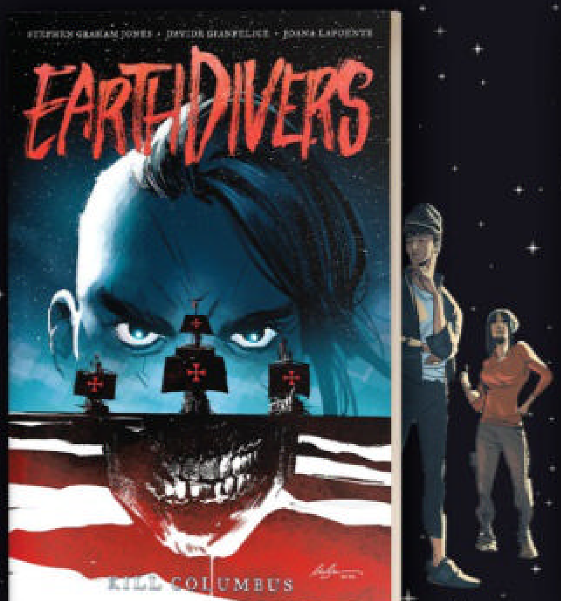
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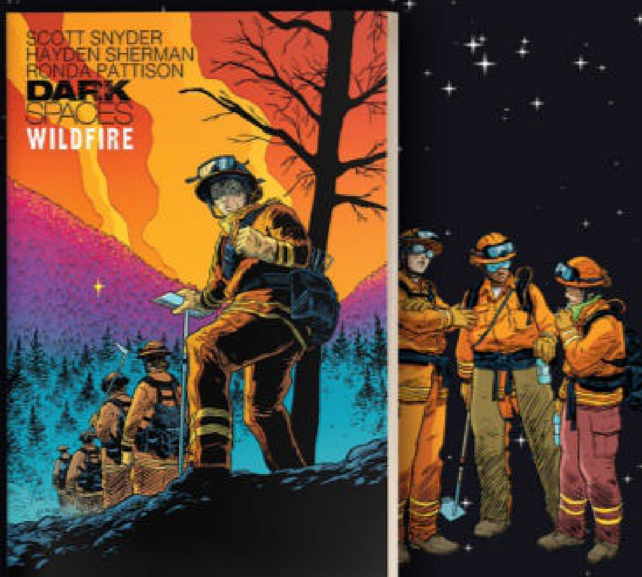
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humans. When a cadre of intergalactic con artists find themselves trapped aboard the *Justice*, a sentient warship that has taken group member Murdock hostage as its pet hacker, the group must find a way to escape its surveillance long enough to break out. "There are so many other fun ways of bringing out conflict with artificial intelligence than just a disembodied voice," Skrutskie says. "It's a bit of a haunted house—something that can watch every move you make and close every door in your face."

In Liu's *The Death I Gave Him*, a sci-fi retelling of *Hamlet* that doubles as a locked-room thriller, scientist Hayden Lichfield is trapped in Elsinore Labs with four people, one of whom is responsible for the murder of his father. His only companion is Horatio, an artificial intelligence who helps him piece together the truth. "AI is such a vast resource, and we rely on it a lot," Liu says. "But with that vastness of information comes scrutiny. You have access to other people, but other people also have access to you. Technology is never neutral."

—Lillian Boyd

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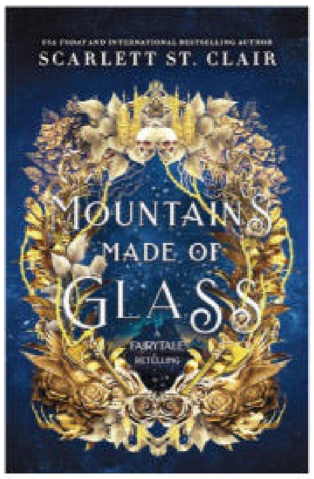
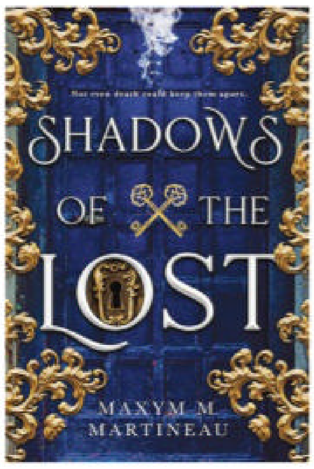
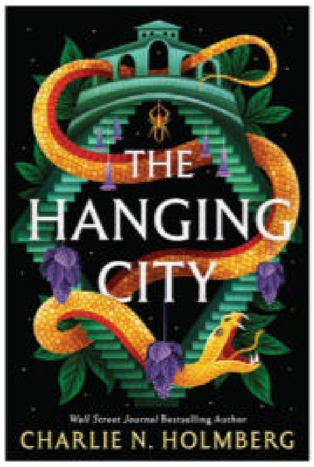


significant departure from the structure of traditional romances. "You're seeing what couples go through over multiple books and the challenges they have in these elaborate worlds," says Christa Désir, editorial director at Bloom Books, which published the fairy tale–inspired romantasy *Mountains Made of Glass* by Scarlett St. Clair in March. "We get to see all the machinations of the people who are trying to keep these two apart and how the couple is fighting against them."

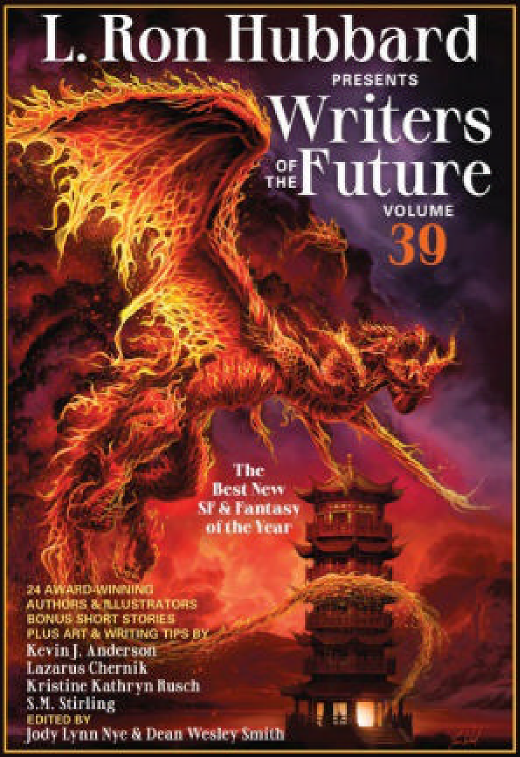
Another factor in romantic fantasy's burgeoning popularity is YA readers graduating to adult titles and "looking for their next dream," says Sourcebooks senior editor Mary Altman. YA author Maxym M. Martineau's first adult fantasy, *Shadows of the Lost* (Sourcebooks Casablanca, June) is an opposites-attract love story centered on an undying assassin who brings his lover back from the grave. A spin-off from her YA series, The Beast Charmers, Martineau's darker and more sexually explicit novel "moves up in age range from YA to new adult," Altman says.



Adrienne Procaccini, senior acquisitions editor at Amazon Publishing, notes that romantasy has "a very strong coming-of-age angle" about the power of finding oneself. *The Hanging City* by Charlie N. Holmberg, due out from Amazon's 47North imprint in August, features a young woman who is exiled from human society but finds sanctuary in the enemy city of trolls, where she unexpectedly falls in love with one of their kind. Like other editors interviewed for this piece, Procaccini sees romantasy as a nearly boundless realm. "There's a very strong appetite for romantic fantasy right now," she says. "This genre has been around for a long time, and I don't think it's going away anytime soon." ■



Vivian Nguyen is a writer and editor in Southern California.



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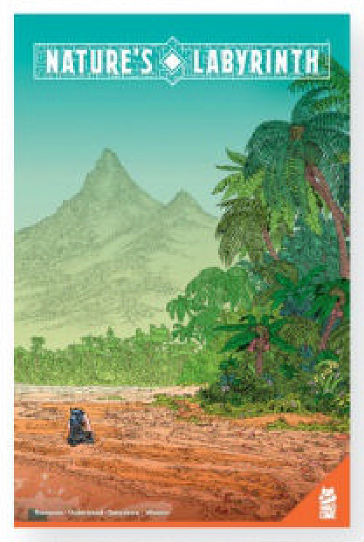


NATURE'S LABYRINTH

ISBN: 9781952303500
On Sale Date: August 01, 2023
Mature

Writer:
Zac Thompson
Artist:
Bayleigh Underwood
Colorist:
Warnia Sahadewa
Letterer:
Rus Wooton

Ex-cons become unwilling participants in a live streamed battle royal hosted in a giant man-made maze on a remote island.

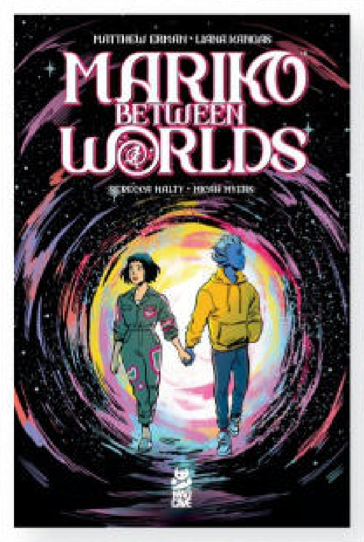
DAHLIA IN THE DARK

DAHLIA IN THE DARK

ISBN: 9781952303524
On Sale Date: August 08, 2023
Teen+

Writer:
Joe Corallo
Artist:
Andrea Milana
Letterer:
Micah Myers

Donny Dahlia takes one last job transporting a package cross country. Little does he know this job will get him caught in the middle of a war between fairy realms.

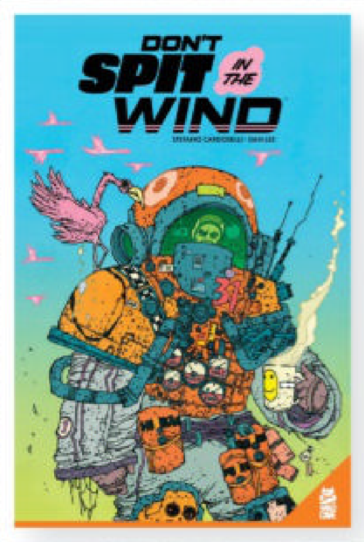


MARIKO BETWEEN WORLDS

ISBN: 9781952303531
On Sale Date: August 22, 2023
Teen+

Writer:
Matthew Erman
Artist:
Liana Kangas
Colorist:
Rebecca Nalty
Letterer:
Micah Myers

A bittersweet story full of lust and stardust for the hearts of anyone who has ever loved and lost.

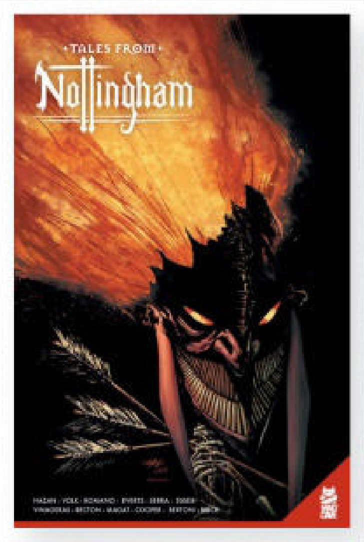


DON'T SPIT IN THE WIND

ISBN: 601947045668
On Sale Date: June 14, 2023
Teen+

Writer:
Stefano Cardoselli
Artist:
Stefano Cardoselli
Colorist & Letterer:
Dan Lee

Garbage men venture back to an abandoned Earth to try to clean up the toxic waste and damage done by humans ages ago.

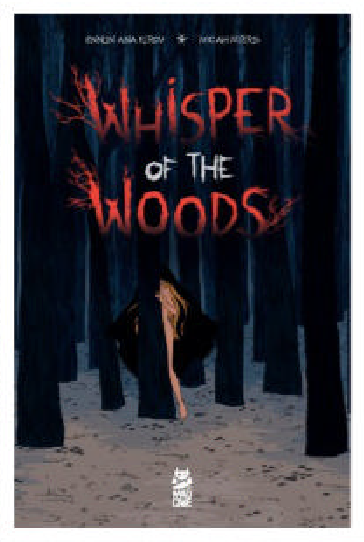


TALES FROM NOTTINGHAM

ISBN: 738582367784
On Sale Date: September 26, 2023
Mature

Writers:
David Hazan, Magdalene Visaggio, Various
Artists:
Shane Connery Volk, Victor Santos, Various
Colorists:
Luca Romano, Rebecca Nalty, Various
Lettererers:
Justin Birch, Chas Pangburn, Various

The many secrets of Nottingham are revealed in this anthology featuring new stories by a diverse group of award-winning creators.



WHISPER OF THE WOODS

ISBN: 9781952303746
On Sale Date: October 24, 2023
Mature

Author & illustrator:
Ennun Ana Lurov

What happens when a foreigner doesn't listen to the local's warnings and dives head-first into a haunted forest in Romania?

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by Michael Simms

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Norbert Oldfoot is a simple mage who makes his living traveling the Bekla River Road, selling trade goods, performing healing magic, and singing traditional songs of heroes. He becomes friends with Kerttu, a coppersmith who has developed a new alloy which is perfect for manufacturing swords. When Kerttu is kidnapped by the evil Wizard Ludek, Kerttu's teenage daughter Tessia, a skilled hunter, recruits three friends, including Norbert, and sets out on a quest to find a legendary dragon who lives in the mountains. With the help of the dragon, Tessia plans to save her father. Little do they know that in order to save Kerttu, they will first have to save the kingdom.

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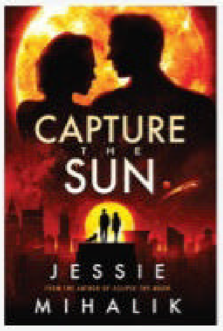
Written in the Stars

Love is in the air—or the airless expanses of space—for fans of romantic science fiction. New books explore a cosmos of questions regarding matters of the heart.

Capture the Sun

Jessie Mihalik. Voyager, June

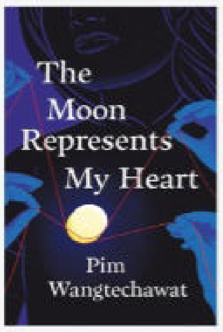
The conclusion to Mihalik's Starlight's Shadows series is a "fast-paced action with palpable tension," per *PW*'s review. It follows artifact thief Lexi, who runs into trouble with her latest assignment on the planet Valovia and is saved by her old flame and ex-crewmate, Nilo. Disturbing news about their former crew sends them on a precarious rescue mission.



The Moon Represents My Heart

Pim Wangtechawat. Blackstone, June

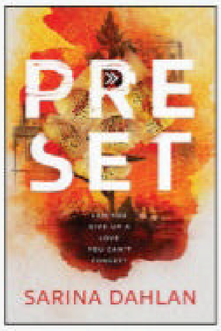
Wangtechawat's debut follows the time-traveling Wang family. After twins Eva and Tom's parents travel to the past and fail to return, the pair grow up fending for themselves. Tommy tries to uncover the truth of their parents' disappearance by traveling back in time, where he meets his love, Peggy, in 1927 London. Captivated, he continues returning to her, even as he feels his grip on time slipping.



Preset

Sarina Dahlan. Blackstone, May

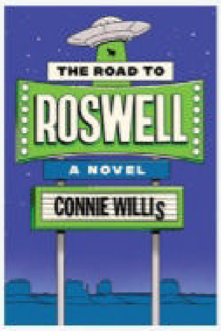
In Dahlan's prequel to 2021's *Reset*, the Last War has ravaged Earth, and the survivors establish the Four Cities. With no government in place, the people look to data company CEO Eli for leadership. When his scientist wife Eleanor travels to the last city that hasn't fully yielded to Eli's control, she discovers how far he will go to "protect" their collective survival.



The Road to Roswell

Connie Willis. Del Rey, June

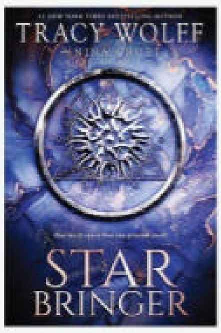
While attending her best friend's UFO-themed wedding in Roswell, N.Mex., no-nonsense Francie is abducted by Indy, an alien who needs assistance in navigating the city. Francie becomes his hostage chauffeur, and they pick up a wild cast of characters, including a charming con man. *PW*'s starred review called it "an absolute blast with abundant humor."



Star Bringer

Tracy Wolff and Nina Croft. Red Tower, July

An assault on a space vessel leaves seven survivors, who are pursued by their assailants, the royal family, and the church. The makeshift crew includes the Empress's daughter, who secretly saw something she wasn't supposed to just before a shipmate rescued her from the attack. —V.N.



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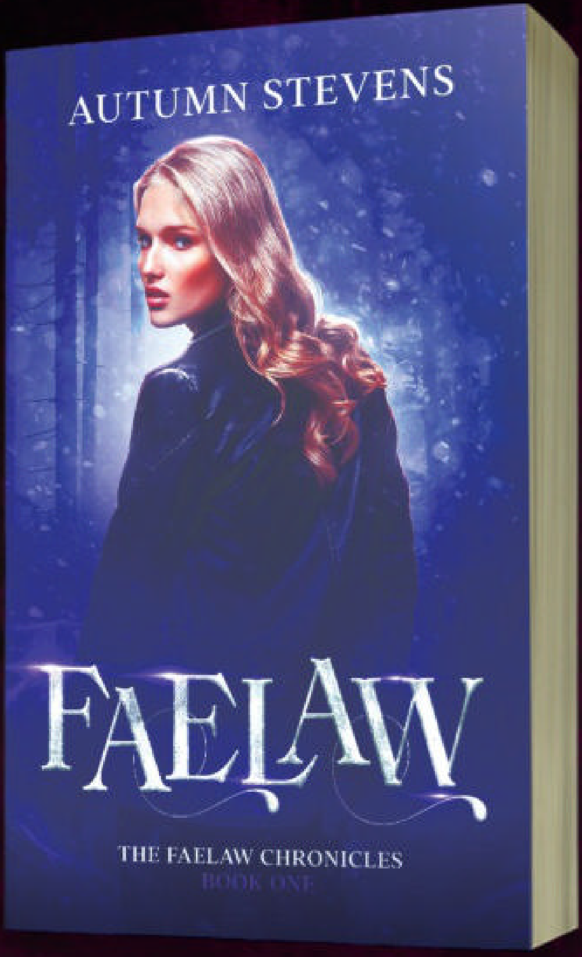
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Getting Meta

Tom Rachman explores the creations of a fictional British novelist in *The Imposters*

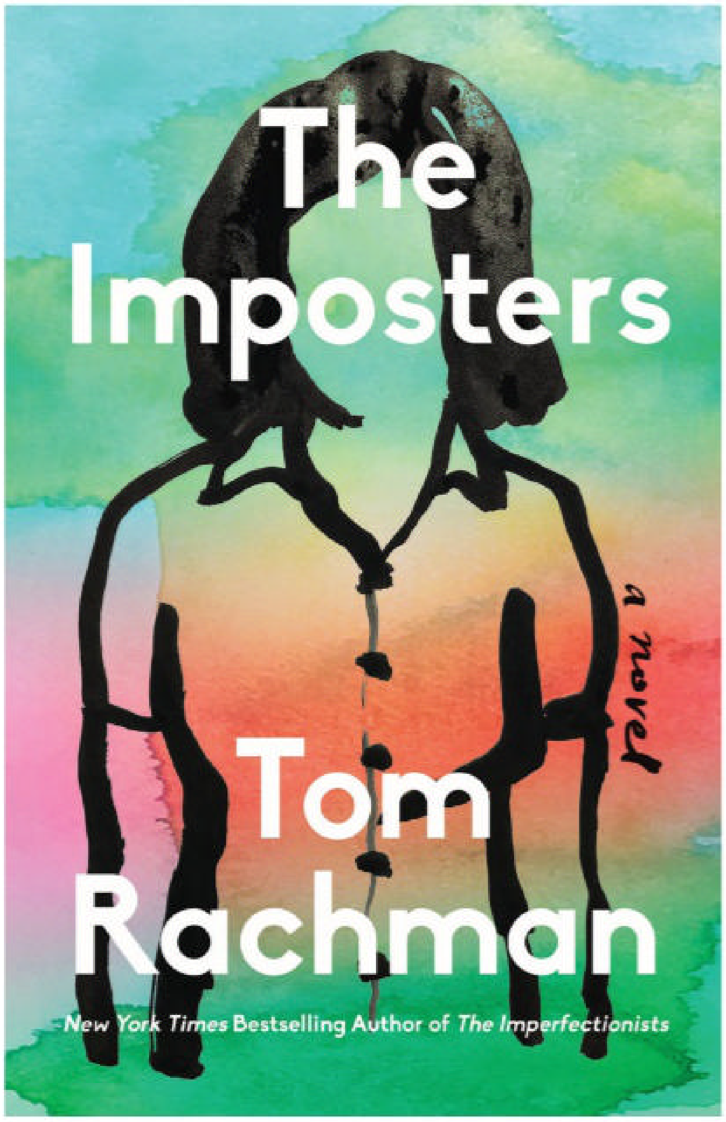
By Chris Vognar

Reading Tom Rachman's new novel *The Imposters* (Little, Brown, June) is like witnessing a high-wire alchemy act. Rachman breathes life into Dora Frenhofer, a lonely 73-year-old Dutch novelist, who then breathes life into her characters, who are themselves all writers—of poetry, of stand-up comedy routines, of fabricated news stories and restaurant reviews and sports articles.

Speaking via Zoom from his home in London, Rachman, a 48-year-old journalist turned novelist with a vast store of imagination and empathy, says it all comes back to storytelling—even as he often finds himself wondering if anyone out there is listening. "I sit at my desk isolated from the world, but obsessing about the world, thinking about all the people out there and trying to capture something of it to say. Storytelling itself is still vitally important in so many different forms, but there are endless different competing entertainments and distractions and diversions and cultural flare-ups that mean it's going to be harder than ever to get people to really pay attention."

It's hard not to think there will always be a place for the Rachmans of the literary world. In *The Imposters* and in his other novels, including the 2010 Rome newspaper ensemble *The Imperfectionists*, he writes with generous gallows humor about deeply flawed people trying to make sense of their surroundings, often through the written word. His prose conveys a sense of joy, even when it pries into darker corners of human nature. There's a hunger for, and understanding of, connection that recalls Virginia Woolf, one of Rachman's literary heroes—particularly her masterpiece about a woman trying to put together a party. Like Mrs. Dalloway, Dora is attempting to gather a group. She's just doing it in her mind, and on the page.

Rachman has long admired Woolf for her ability to weave the consciousness of multiple characters into a single narrative whole. "Books like *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* have the perspective of the reader leaping from one swirling mind to another, so that they end up becoming this gigantic whirlwind around what might be fairly mundane events," he says. "But they are full of emotional power because of the depth of feeling of those characters and the different perspectives that are seared into you."



Dora, who is isolated by the pandemic and her natural, gradual withdrawal from the world, has come to doubt herself and her purpose as both a person and a writer. She warms up a little with each small point of contact with the outside world, but she never seeks such contact. Her true confidants are the characters in her fiction.

Among the wandering souls conjured by Rachman (and Dora) in *The Imposters* are Beck, Dora's estranged daughter. She's a Los Angeles writer who finds herself ghostwriting for a famous comedian; Will, a London bicycle courier who stumbles into a gig editing copy for a sensationalist news aggregator; and Danny, a Brooklyn novelist in mid-career crisis.

Danny's humiliations are myriad. At an event, he notices a massive crowd outside the hall where he's supposed to read from his latest book and figures his ship has come in. He is wrong. The Pakistani Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai has been scheduled in the room next door. In another episode, he goes to do a reading at an independent bookstore and nobody shows up. He signs a copy of his novel anyway and is then promptly charged for it, since the store can no longer return the defaced edition to the publisher.

These episodes are borrowed and modified from Rachman's own experiences. As funny as they read on the page, they circle back to the writer's anxiety regarding the novelist's place in the cultural firmament—an anxiety that boils down to a central question, does anyone care?

"Why should they pay attention to me?" Rachman asks. "Do I really have anything that merits more than the shouting going on in the next room? It all ends up leading you to, I wouldn't necessarily say a crisis, but deep doubt. The solution is the writing itself. And that's the irony about all of this."

Rachman is soft-spoken, and has a way of unleashing long, thoughtful, loping sentences as he talks. But the hyper-intelligence comes with no conspicuous ego. He carries himself with a writerly self-deprecation.

Born in London but raised in Vancouver, the son of two psychologists, he says he wanted to write fiction from a young age, but he didn't feel he had enough life experience. So he studied journalism at Columbia University and got out into the world as an international correspondent for outlets including the Associated Press, for which he reported from India, Italy, Japan, and elsewhere.

"I had no clue about how to do that and no natural talent or skill or particular ability at the job," Rachman says. "But I thought I could at least travel the world and read more and write more if I could get into that trade." His goal was to use journalism as a means to polish his writing chops and to see and live in enough of the world to become a good novelist.

Eventually he mustered the savings and the courage to move to Paris and try fiction, supporting himself by working as an editor at the *International Herald Tribune*. "I lived on very thin baguettes and very thin slices of cheese for a year, and I worked away and I wrote a manuscript that was absolutely terrible," he says. He tried again, and broke through in 2010 with *The Imperfectionists*.

Rachman's writing combines the best of both worlds: the external observational prowess of journalism, and the interiority of literature. *The Imposters* has both a specific sense of time and place—many places, actually—and a deeper knowledge of human nature and its foibles.

"I am fascinated by what's happening in other people's heads, and that was really what drew me in more than the news," Rachman says. "But the experience of having seen a lot helped me then to write, I hope, with a bit more depth about characters."

Despite his writerly self-doubt, his work is well worth caring about. ■

Chris Vognar is a freelance culture writer, and was the 2009 Nieman Arts and Culture Fellow at Harvard University.

Reviews

Fiction

The Imposters

Tom Rachman. Little, Brown, $29 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-316-55285-1

Rachman returns with a droll if uneven novel in stories, the form he used with such brilliance in *The Imperfectionists*, this time charting the lonely days of a Dutch novelist. Dora Frenhofer, it seems, is inventing fictional characters to replace the people no longer in her life. In her commitment to writing, she's spurned friends and family, including her children, though her sacrifice hasn't yielded many readers. Rachman's narrative, in turn, comprises Dora's stories. One, titled "The novelist's estranged daughter," takes the point of view of Dora's daughter, Beka, a California comedy writer going stir crazy during the Covid-19 lockdown. Some are captivating, especially "The man who took all the books away," a harrowing and Kafkaesque tale of a young Syrian man's imprisonment for possessing a borrowed phone containing a video satirizing the country's president. Others, though funny, have less heft, such as "A writer from the festival," which tracks a third-rate novelist's misadventures as he tries to promote his work ("Come one, come all," reads his advertisement for a reading; in the end, Dora writes, "All couldn't make it. Nor could one"). Rachman remains a master comic stylist, but here the whole is less than its gleaming parts. *Agent: Natasha Fairweather, RCW Literary. (June)*

Holding Pattern

Jenny Xie. Riverhead, $27 (288p) ISBN 978-0-593-53970-5

A woman struggles to come to terms with her mother's newfound happiness while her own life falls apart in Xie's funny and sharp debut. Kathleen Cheng has just been dumped by her boyfriend, prompting her to leave her graduate psychology program at Johns Hopkins and return home to her mother's house in California. On impulse, she takes a job as a "cuddle provider," providing clients with nonsexual touching. Meanwhile, her mother, Marissa, who emigrated with Kathleen from Shanghai when she was an infant and became a heavy drinker after divorcing her father, is now sober and on the verge of marrying a tech tycoon. As Kathleen puts together a Vegas bachelorette weekend for Marissa, crosses a boundary or two with a client, and deals with the fact that her high school boyfriend is now dating her best friend, she slowly begins to find a new path for herself. Xie's strong character work keeps the narrative bubbling along on its episodic arc, and her affectionate study of the ways Kathleen and Marissa madden and inspire each other adds depth. This author is off to a stellar start. *Agent: Sarah Bowlin, Aevitas Creative Management. (June)*

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In A Quitter's Paradise, *the debut novel from Elysha Chang, a young woman searches for direction while dealing with her mother's death (reviewed on p. 35).*

Be Mine

Richard Ford. Ecco, $30 (352p) ISBN 978-0-06-169208-6

Ford finds Frank Bascombe, star of *The Sportswriter*, still searching for the meaning of life in his appealing latest. Frank, 74 and twice divorced, stays buoyant despite some mortal despair by indulging in clichés such as falling for a younger massage therapist. His son, Paul, has ALS, and he proposes they road-trip together to Mount Rushmore. In a rented RV, Frank and Paul set out from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., where Paul has just finished participating in a clinical study. On the way through South Dakota, they stop at the famed Corn Palace, spend a night at a rundown motel, and visit a dire casino called the Fawning Buffalo. "What causes places to be awful is always of interest," Frank notes in Rapid City. Father and son banter with mock cruelty, but Frank's outlook is sincere: "Not every story ends happy. Out in the gloom you can find some lights on." These pages are steeped in melancholy, and for the most part Ford's prose stays within the speed limit, neither soaring nor stalling, though he stops the reader cold with the occasional startling insight: Paul, divulging the details of his dementia, remarks on Frank's indomitable mind: "You connect everything." Ford's fans will find much to love. *(June)*

Watch Us Dance

Leila Slimani, trans. from the French by Sam Taylor. Viking, $28 (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-49330-4

Slimani draws on her family's history for a sprawling tale of 1960s Morocco, the second installment in a planned trilogy (after *In the Country of Others*). The central couple, Amine Belhaj and his French wife, Mathilde, are now middle-aged and unexpectedly prosperous, the family farm having done surprisingly well. Their bookish daughter, Aicha, is studying medicine in France, while their son, Selim, is less ambitious, spending his days swimming in the Belhajs' swimming pool—an unheard-of luxury for the time and place—and embarking on an incestuous affair with his aunt, the depressed and beautiful Selma. In the background, following the country's recent independence from France, Moroccan people struggle with disillusionment. The new king, Hassan II, whose reign is marked by state violence, is a constant presence. In an early chapter, Amine, gratified by the sovereign's interest in agriculture, hangs a framed photograph of Hassan II in his office. Later, Aicha's future husband, Mehdi, fatefully skips the king's 42nd birthday party, during which there's a coup attempt. Though the surfeit of characters and vertiginous plot points tend to throttle the momentum, Slimani continues to prove herself a powerful writer by delivering a convicing and immersive depiction of a complicated era in Morocco's history. It's an accomplished portrait of a time and place, though it comes at the expense of a fully realized family saga. *(June)*

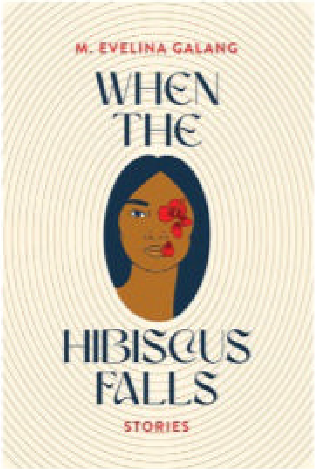
My Murder

Katie Williams. Riverhead, $27 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-54376-4

Williams (*Tell the Machine Goodnight*) delivers a clever speculative story of cloning and crime. Lou is told by a government-sponsored "replication commission" that she's been cloned from a victim of serial killer Edward Early. With no memories of her earlier life as the doting mother and loving wife she believes herself to be, she attempts to pick up where the old Lou left off in her suburban Michigan home. Lou and replicants of Early's other four victims meet in a support group, where they dish on the difficulties of their readjustments: they have no memory of their murders, and they distance themselves from their pre-murder personae as "my other me." Lou, in particular, is puzzled by unexplained mysteries about her pre-clone life—turns out the old Lou's marriage wasn't so sunny after all—that are exacerbated after she visits Early in prison. Though she meets him in hopes he'll explain why he picked her, his bombshell revelation is much more than what she bargained for, and it leads to a surprising denouement. Though the tone is darkly comic, Williams poses provocative questions about cloning and resurrection, and she pulls off an intelligent murder mystery to boot. This creep-fest is acerbic and disturbing in equal measure. *(June)*

★ When the Hibiscus Falls

M. Evelina Galang. Coffee House, $17.95 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-56689-679-5



Galang's masterly latest (after *Her Wild American Self*) takes on xenophobia, racism, and other ills via stories of strong Filipino women. In "America, Still Beautiful," elderly Faustina watches the 2016 election returns with her granddaughter Mahal and imagines her late husband, Orlando, is there with them. While mulling over the candidates—the "lady" and the "bully"—she reflects on Orlando's persecution as a journalist in Manila and their struggle to start a business in 1990s Milwaukee, and assumes Orlando would have supported Trump. Only after Trump's victory does Faustina grasp its implications, when a white woman tells her, "We won. He's deporting all of you. Comprehendo?" "The Typhoon Is a Hurricane" follows a Miami nurse named Celit on the eve of Hurricane Irma, as she cares for her elderly uncle Tito Pat, who has dementia. Tito Pat, like Faustina, is lost in his memories of the Philippines, often mistaking Celit for his mother or father and crying out in the night. Galang revisits Faustina and Mahal in "Fighting Filipina," as Mahal travels from Miami to Milwaukee to be with her grandmother during the early days of the pandemic. During Mahal's flight, fellow passengers refer to her by racial slurs and ask to be moved away from her ("The virus runs people's hate to the surface like a fever," Mahal thinks). What makes these stories so powerful and poignant are the inner lives of the characters, a complex blend of nostalgia, desire for assimilation, and defiance. This is a winner. *(June)*

★ Farrell Covington and the Limits of Style

Paul Rudnick. Atria, $28.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-66800-467-8

An aspiring writer becomes enamored of a dashing fellow student at Yale in Rudnick's dazzling and funny latest (after *Playing the Palace*). It's 1973, and narrator Nate Reminger, who is Jewish, struggles to achieve his literary ambitions. He soon meets flamboyant and outspoken Farrell Covington, who was raised in a powerful Wasp family and "smells like beauty and money and youth." Dazzled by Farrell's sophistication and confidence, Nate quickly falls head over heels for Farrell. Despite their differences, they share affinities for gay culture and such celebrities as Bette Midler, and after sleeping together, they fall into a long-running relationship until Farrell's father puts a stop to it. After college, Nate moves to New York City, where he hones his playwriting skills and basks in the post-Stonewall gay scene. As Rudnick moves the story into the '80s, Nate's successful playwriting career earn him screenwriting work in Hollywood, and, despite the disapproving Covingtons, the pair fight to make time for each other, a resource that suddenly becomes all too precious during the early days of the AIDS epidemic. The author proves himself to be in top form, and each page is loaded with quippy dialogue and winning character work. It's a roaring good time. *(June)*

A Quitter's Paradise

Elysha Chang. SJP Lit, $27.95 (296p) ISBN 978-1-63893-052-5

Chang debuts with the understated and quietly devastating story of a grieving 20-something woman. In 2013 New York City, Eleanor Liu is on track to fulfill her late mother Rita's low expectations, having dropped out of a neuroscience graduate program to work in her

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classmate-turned-husband's lab. But, bored and unfulfilled both matrimonially and professionally, Eleanor soon has an affair with a colleague. In the months following her mother's death, Eleanor makes increasingly risky and bizarre choices, such as spending unsanctioned time with a primate from the lab, before decamping for her childhood home in New Jersey, where she goes through Rita's belongings and begins to grasp a greater sense of her life. Eleanor's narration alternates with flashbacks to her childhood and adolescence—notably her relationship with her troubled older sister—and of her parents' emigration from Taipei in the late 1970s. The somewhat pensive tone is broken up by moments of levity, but always returns to questions of family history and the impossibility of understanding someone else's story when one's own memories are so unreliable. Chang is off to a promising start. *(June)*

And Then He Sang a Lullaby

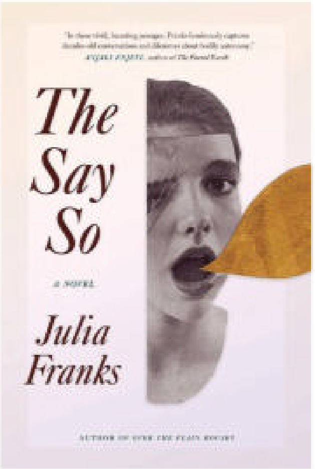
Ani Kayode Somtochukwu. Grove/Gay, $27 (304p) ISBN 978-0-8021-6075-1

Nigerian writer Ani's auspicious debut chronicles the hope and pain of two queer students as they embark on a forbidden relationship at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka. August has always struggled to live up to his "venerable" name, feeling "he was unworthy of anything but failure." After August meets Segun at a cybercafé, he has frequent thoughts about the other man and revisits the café to see him again. But with homosexuality being illegal, August tells Segun, "I don't know how to live this life." Segun, in contrast, refuses to be ashamed of who he is. He's also had his share of difficulties, having dealt with an abusive relationship and bullying from roommates. Then, after August and Segun split up, Segun is attacked. The incident prompts August to give up his self-loathing, acknowledge his sexuality, and redouble his efforts to be with Segun. In emotionally fraught scenes, Ani lays bare the characters' fragile states, with August grappling with his fear and excitement after a kiss or Segun processing his anger over past abuses. This timely and striking love story resonates with authenticity. *Agent: Emma Shercliff, Laxfield Literary Assoc. (June)*

★ The Say So

Julia Franks. Hub City, $28 (368p) ISBN 979-8-88574-007-4

Franks (*Over the Plain Houses*) follows in her beautiful latest the ripple effects after a teenager is forced to give up her baby. It's 1957 in Charlotte, N.C., and quiet, pretty Edie Carrigan falls for Simon Bloom, an older Jewish boy, whom Edie's parents don't approve of. Edie's mother would rather Edie spend time with her former beau, Aster Eriksen, but after Edie becomes pregnant, she's sent to a home for unwed mothers, where she's expected to give her baby up for adoption. That's not what Edie wants, though, and after giving birth she refuses to sign the court papers. She visits her good friend Luce Waddell, hoping for help. Instead, a dramatic scene unfolds between the two of them, laying bare the limits of the girls' friendship and what they're able to share with each other. Franks then jumps forward 25 years, with Luce having raised a daughter, who has also become unexpectedly pregnant, and the situation provides an opportunity for Edie and Luce to reconnect. In one devastating plot turn after another, Franks injects bracing honesty into her depictions of the characters, always in gorgeous prose. Describing Edie and Simon's erstwhile love, she writes, "their love loosened and broke, like decomposing fruit. It was a shock, to see it prove so seasonal." This will stay with readers. *(June)*



Crooked Plow

Itamar Vieira Júnior, trans. from the Portuguese by Johnny Lorenz. Verso, $19.95 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-1-83976-640-4

Brazilian writer Vieira Júnior's alluring English-language debut traces the lives of twin sisters in rural Brazil after a catastrophic accident. Belonísia and Bibiana, five years old, discover an ivory-handled knife hidden by their grandmother. They each put the knife in their mouths, then fight over it, and one of them loses a tongue (it's not immediately clear which of them it is). In the first part, Bibiana chronicles the farm labor, religious practices, and struggles of their family and neighbors in Água Negra, their remote community of Black subsistence farmers, and offers impressionistic views of the girls' healer father: "He'd speak differently, he'd sing and whirl with wonderful agility around the room, endowed with the powers of the spirits of the forest, the waters, the mountains, the air." The second part, narrated by Belonísia, picks up with the twins as young adults, revealing the limited choices they have for marriage and the dignity they scrape together. In the third act, a folkloric spirit named Santa Rita the Fisherwoman joins the twins to share secrets of their grandmother's past involving the hidden knife. Vieira Júnior conveys the girls' childhood confusion and wonder in hypnotic prose, and he brings the close-knit Água Negra to life. This heralds the arrival of a welcome voice. *(June)*

Glass Bottle Season

Fletcher Michael. Keylight, $24.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-68442-942-4

Michael (Vulture) delivers a genial but meandering coming-of-age set in Providence, R.I. It's the summer of 2017 and Ray Wilson-Domingo, 22, who is half Cuban and grew up in a middle-class neighborhood, hopes to one day feel like less of an outsider among his college friends, many of whom descend from old money. As the others plan their futures, Ray flirts with the idea of law school, but remains undecided. In the meantime, he spends the summer working at a wine shop and partying with his friends at the Newport Folk Festival, polo matches, and a society wedding, as well as speculating about the mysterious older woman who has just moved into an abandoned mansion. The summer seems off to a good start, but hard-partying Ray is prone to making bad decisions—in one comic scene, he and a fellow bartender get drunk while working at the polo club and steal a bunch of lobsters—that threaten his status in the community. Though Ray's drifting course can leave the novel feeling light on structure and tension, Michael perfectly captures the confounding moment between college graduation and adult responsibilities. All in all, the drunken escapades are great fun. *(June)*

Fat Time and Other Stories

Jeffery Renard Allen. Graywolf, $16 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-1-64445-239-4

Allen (*Rails Under My Back*) offers an arresting collection featuring surreal situations along with riffs on the lives of famous Black men. A misty atmosphere pervades the proceedings. The opener, "Testimonial (Supported in Belief/Verified in Fact)," reads like a tall tale, following a man trying to save his son from a lynch mob by hiding the boy inside a cow's anus. In the title story, Allen imagines an alternate history in which boxer Jack Johnson's first filmed fight against Tommy Burns becomes a duel to the death. Miles Davis narrates a troubled relationship with a new guitarist in "Pinocchio." Allen renders the bandleader's voice with welcome wit and acidity, though he's less successful with Jimi Hendrix, the star of "Heads," a plodding misfire that lends little imagination to the revolutionary guitarist's inner life and leans heavily on descriptions of Hendrix drinking wine, smoking cigarettes, and staring out the window. Though some entries stumble, the author provokes with riveting images, dark humor, and a chilling sense of desperation. When Allen is on, he's a force to be reckoned with. *(June)*

* * *

Crow Mary

Kathleen Grissom. Atria, $28.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-4767-4847-4

Grissom (*The Kitchen House*) offers an ambitious account of bravery and initiative inspired by the true story of a Crow woman who married a white man in late-19th-century Montana. Goes First is happy as a teenager, learning from her mother and grandmother how to pray, build a sweat lodge, and tan hides, and picking up English from her Métis grandfather. When Goes First is 16, the man she's meant to marry is killed in a buffalo stampede, and she agrees to marry 34-year-old white fur trader and whiskey seller Abe Farwell, who gives her people guns for protection against enemy Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. For their wedding ceremony, she's renamed Mary, and Abe brings her to Fort Benton, Mont., where she befriends a Métis woman who helps her deal with culture shock. Mary also shows cunning and strength when faced with violence and injustice, particularly with a drunken party of marauders while on a trading trip with Abe in Canada, qualities that drive the narrative toward a thrilling climax. With a flashback-heavy narrative, Grissom effectively conveys how Mary's Crow childhood stays with her over the course of her new life. This moving story of one woman's grit, survival, and resilience will keep readers turning the pages. *Agent: Rebecca Gradinger, Fletcher & Co. (June)*

* * *

The Beach at Summerly

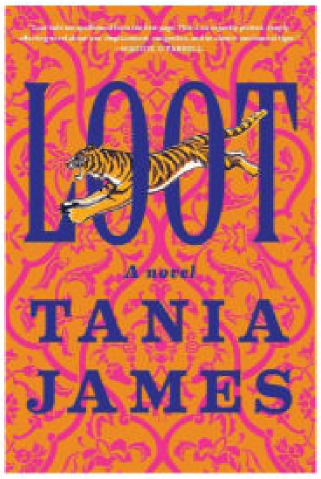
Beatriz Williams. Morrow, $30 (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-302084-9

Williams (*The Summer Wives*) revisits the fictional Winthrop Island off the coast of Connecticut in this exciting story of summer love and espionage. It's 1946 and 20-year-old Emilia Winthrop, who once dreamed of leaving for college, looks after her mother after she had a stroke. Her father, meanwhile, maintains the Peabody family's beachfront estate, where Peabody sons Amory and Shep return from the war, their brother having died in battle, and their aunt Olive arrives to live in the guest house. A budding romance develops between Emilia and Shep after she agrees to babysit for the worldly Olive. Emilia also meets a man named Sumner Fox, who claims to be writing a book. Later, Sumner shocks Emilia by revealing he is an FBI agent, Olive is a Soviet spy, and he needs Emilia's help in exposing her. Williams then jumps ahead eight years. Emilia is pursuing her doctorate at Wellesley College when she's contacted by Sumner, who requests her help in a prisoner exchange involving Olive. In flashbacks, Williams reveals the details of her cooperation with Sumner and fallout with the Peabodys back in the summer of '46. Williams complements her complex narrative with a keen perspective on the island's class strata. Readers will be hooked from the first page. *Agent: Alexandra Machinist, ICM Partners. (June)*

* * *

★ Loot

Tania James. Knopf, $28 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-53597-4



James (*The Tusk That Did the Damage*) returns with a spectacular tale of creativity and colonialism drawing on the "Tippoo's Tiger" automaton displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. In 1794 Mysore, India, teenager Abbas carves intricate mechanical toys at his father's furniture shop. After Mysore's ruler, Tipu Sultan, learns of Abbas's talents, he orders Abbas to help French inventor and clockmaker Lucien du Leze craft Mysore's first automaton. Their "fantastical curiosity," as Tipu calls the life-size wooden tiger capable of sound and movement, pleases the court. While under du Leze's tutelage, Abbas meets Jehanne Martine, the biracial daughter of Tipu's French armorer. Du Leze, Jehanne, and her father sail to France in 1799, and Abbas stays behind to tend his ailing father. His hopes to follow them are dashed by Britain's bloody conquest of Mysore, and by the time he arrives in Rouen in 1805 to take up the apprenticeship he's been promised, du Leze is dead. He reunites with Jehanne, who tells him the British have shipped the mechanical tiger to England with other looted artifacts. Abbas proposes an audacious plan to reclaim the object, believing its public display could make them rich and give them the chance to make their mark on history. There's an unceasing exuberance to the prose, and James's descriptions are endlessly witty (du Leze's outfit for the tiger's unveiling, an Afghani tunic and a shawl from Kashmir, is "an atlas of textiles"). Rarely is a novel so dense with painful themes also such fun. At once swashbuckling and searing, this is a marvelous achievement. *(June)*

The Brightest Star

Gail Tsukiyama. HarperVia, $32 (352p) ISBN 978-0-06-321375-3

Tsukiyama (*The Color of Air*) delivers a comprehensive but lackluster fictionalized memoir of Anna May Wong, the first successful Chinese American film actor. Since Anna May's childhood in 1910s Los Angeles, she's dreamed of becoming a movie star. Her traditional father, who runs a laundry, is staunchly opposed, but her mother and older sister are quietly supportive. At 16, Anna May lands a breakout role in *The Toll of the Seal*, though pervasive racism and anti-miscegenation laws dog her career and mostly limit her to stereotyped bit parts. She's more readily accepted in Europe than China, where the Chinese press excoriates her with accusations that she's dishonoring her heritage. Still, after her father and younger siblings return to his ancestral Chinese village, she visits them in 1936. She faces more challenges in the 1950s, first with a serious medical diagnosis and then with fewer opportunities for roles, but her ambition persists. Tsukiyama nails the tone of an amateur memoirist struggling to get her story down, but it doesn't make for very dynamic fiction, and the rushed pacing doesn't help. Tsukiyama makes clear the miraculous nature of Wong's story but doesn't quite find the form to convey it. *Agent: Joy Harris, Joy Harris Literary Agency. (June)*

Poetry

Still Falling

Jennifer Grotz. Graywolf, $16 trade paper (72p) ISBN 978-1-64445-231-8

"I don't know/ how we keep living in a world/ that never explains why," Grotz (*Window Left Open*) writes in her ruminative and beautifully crafted fourth collection. Navigating love, grief, and the various losses one faces in a life, Grotz considers how "The mind won't stop minding" as she delves into the intricate and intimate parts of the attentive self that witnesses "the stillness, the windless calm" and the "heartbreak indigo." The poet finds solace even in the midst of confusion or the aftermath of loss. "A walk is a poem," Grotz offers, "So is a grief." Elsewhere, she writes beautifully on being depressed, asserting "I wasn't indifferent, I was sinking./ I stared at nothing and heard my voice say,// just wait a little longer. I didn't know/ which was me—the urging or the sinking." "Earth's the right place for love," she declares at the end of "In Sicily." Bestowing many moving and lyrical insights, this deserves to be read slowly and compassionately. *(May)*

A "Working Life"

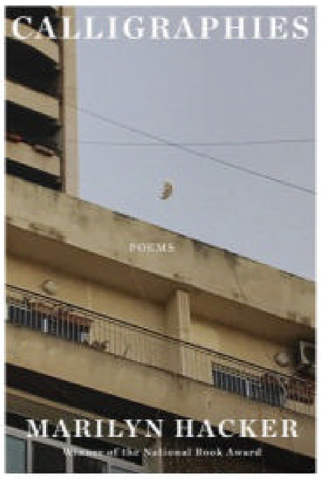
Eileen Myles. Grove, $26 (288p) ISBN 978-0-8021-6189-5

"I wanted to say a 'Working Life' means the poems are the plan, not that this book is about labor exactly," explains Myles (*I Must Be Living Twice*) at the end of this impressive collection of poems grounded in the mundane, which includes coffee and dogs. "It's not that I have/ a purpose. It's more/ like I don't want/ you to think I don't/ have one," Myles writes. With just a few words per line, their poems move down the page quickly, the language dashed off and immediate, as though keeping pace with the poet's mind. Some feel like shorthand entries in a diary: "I like the inexactness/ of cabs, the cash/ the entire ana/ log experience/ of them. The details/ of the Joe & Charlie/ visit is fading, I told/ him about lunch with Gail." The poem "Put My House" is full of both beautiful nonsense and tender longing: "let me breathe/ inside you// let me smell// your guts// put your boat/ in my eye// let me eat/ your friends// put these hours/ inside your/ hours." While at times, these poems can present as random and rapidly scribbled, there are rewards here for the readers who stick with them, revealing the joys of a life built out of thinking, dreaming, and making. *(Apr.)*

★ Calligraphies

Marilyn Hacker. Norton, $26.95 (144p) ISBN 978-1-324-03646-3

These formally ambitious and energetic poems by Hacker (*A Different Distance*) feature a progression of sonnet crowns, ghazals, sapphics, pantoums, and linked haiku that carry the reader through a litany of maladies. These include the pandemic, political and personal pains ("the desiccated nerves of lost desires"), the plight of refugees, the difficulty of learning Arabic, and the loneliness of quarantine. Each stanza picks up a thread from the last, the dismal emotional weather relieved by the pleasures of a good wine, an open-air market, or a veal chop. Hacker calls out nonsense as she sees it: "'To write a sonnet is a fascist act'—/ Suggest that to the next tyre-burning goon this winter!" But she is equally hard on herself, as in the witty and perfect ghazal she calls "Myself." She dedicates poems to Karthika Nair, a French Indian poet, and Fadwa Suleiman, the late Syrian actor and civil war activist—two among the many people Hacker has worked with in Paris and elsewhere. These varied and powerful poems highlight the healing that resides in poetic collaboration and friendship across borders. *(Apr.)*



Five Fifty-Five

Maura Dooley. Bloodaxe, $16.95 trade paper (64p) ISBN 978-1-78037-657-8

Sonically elegant and rich with memorable descriptions and images, the latest from Dooley (after *The Silvering*) explores the past, mortality, and the silences and omissions that invite deeper reflection on the page. Poems such as the gorgeous "A Ruined Castle in Wales" astonish with their vision: "clouds cloak the walls/ in rain," and a gift shop described as holding "dragons, blankets, ice cream." A stanza break separates the poem's descriptive mode from its impactful emotional insight: "Those times will come again./ When will those times come again?/ These times will never come again." Similarly, "A Bunch of Consolations" begins, "You think they'll always be there,/ (the ones who always have been)," ending on a poignant question: "What have you learned exactly?/ To love, to speak up, to hold steady./ Hold steady." In "L'Heure Bleue," which features an epigraph by Jean Rhys, she writes, "Not Paris, here the hour between dog and wolf/ is bitter blue, a wind that silks about the neck/ and tightens." Several of these entries feature delightful allusions to such literary details as Jane Austen's rosebud and Dante and Virgil in Ravenna, widening the world of these poems and placing them in conversation with the larger universe of writing. Commanding and quietly layered, these lyrically precise and subtle poems deserve revisiting. *(Apr.)*

★ Iggy Horse

Michael Earl Craig. Wave, $18 trade paper (98p) ISBN 978-1-950268-75-7

Craig (*Woods and Clouds Interchangeable*) combines absurdity, thoughtful engagement with language, and linguistic play in his humorous latest. Artfully constructed poems show how a mind moves through associations, allowing the reader to observe the path of neurons firing from connection to connection: "I extend one foot out/ from under the covers./ The cover of night./ The album's cover./ The barbecue's, its/ rustic joie de vivre in/ waxed cotton duck." The levity throughout encourages the reader to follow the oddly logical thought process behind them, as in "Pep Talk to Self Eating Salad at Airport": "Montana is the Italy of the New World./ Montana is God's Italy./ Montana is the Italy of the people./ It's the real Italy./ Italy is Montana./ Montana, the Italy of God./ Yes./ Like Italy only different." There is a critical eye at work in these pages; the poem "Underfoot" begins with an image that hauntingly captures a sense of collapse: "The forest floor feels almost spongy with twigs/ made from decomposing pianos." Other poems betray a philosophical suspicion toward language, as when the speaker witnesses a flock of birds "flutter up like sacred/ soap-flake eunuch moths" and reflects on "the gaudiness of poetry." These pages deliver a winning combination of uncanny discernment and irreverence. *(Apr.)*

★ To 2040

Jorie Graham. Copper Canyon, $25 trade paper (112p) ISBN 978-1-55659-677-3

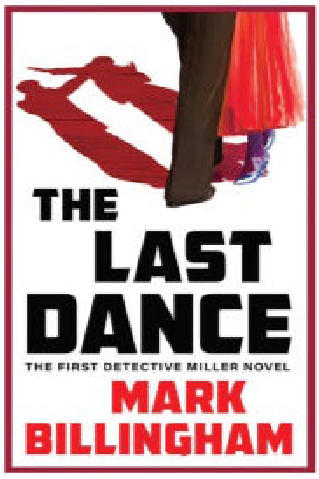
Graham (*{To} The Last {Be} Human*) stuns with this end-of-life-as-we-know-it guide for those who may need to prepare for the last, ethereal blows; "The earth says/ it is time. Everyone checks their watch./ Your destination is in sight. Be/ ready. Brace." Settings range from "Rocks// burning in the/ distance. Then distance/ burning" to medical facilities and domestic spaces where a quince branch blooms in a vase. The book inhabits the shape-shifting grammar of the future perfect: "Did we// survive at the end/ of this story, I ask/ the sun. I give up/ on tenses here." The end is imagined and undone again: "I am spending my life, I thought. I am un-/ prepared. It is running thru/ my fingers. The wind is/ still wild. My bones hurt sometimes/ causing pain. It is not terror./ I feel for the cash in my pocket./ I do not have time to prepare." At one point, the poet is addressed by the sun, who first encourages, "Be there, as long as you can,// take it, be there/ as I rise"—and finally condescends, "But how/ I admired yr/ breathing… The end is/ a hard thing to// comprehend. You did not /comprehend it." This is a rare gift: an ardent and pitiless anthem to a crazed, razed world. *(Apr.)*

Mystery/Thriller

★ The Last Dance

Mark Billingham. Atlantic Monthly, $28 (400p) ISBN 978-0-8021-6194-9

Bellingham (*Sleepyhead*) launches a cracking new mystery series featuring the charming, sarcastic British Det. Sgt. Declan Miller. Miller's wife, Alex—also a detective—was recently murdered on the job. Afternoons spent in the company of his pet rats and punctuated by visits from Alex's ghost are not enough to keep Declan away from work for long, though, and he returns, grieving, after a six-week hiatus. The first case assigned to Miller and his new partner, Sara Xiu, is a double murder. It initially appears that the two victims—an organized crime heir and an IT consultant—have nothing in common, but after Declan taps into a network of sources spanning his and Alex's ballroom dancing friends, an old informant, and Alex's ghost, he starts to fear a complex conspiracy is at hand. Meanwhile, Declan's friend, prison snitch Gary "Chesshead" Cole, tries to find Alex's murderer, with tragic results. Bellingham imbues Miller with a brilliant sense of humor and populates the margins of this well-paced mystery with lovable, fully fleshed characters whom readers will adore. This is the author at his best. *Agent: David Forrer, InkWell Management. (July)*



The Only One Left

Riley Sager. Dutton, $28 (400p) ISBN 978-0-593183-22-9

Sager (*The House Across the Lake*) again creatively toys with thriller mainstays in this gothic riff on the sinister caretaker trope. It's 1983, and home health aide Kit McDeere is desperate for work after her previous client overdosed on fentanyl from a bottle Kit left within reach. While McDeere avoided prosecution, she's still suspected by many—including the police—of having deliberately killed the woman. Broke, Kit has no choice but to accept a new assignment that her boss warns is especially difficult: serving as the caregiver for the paralyzed 71-year-old Lenora Hope. Like Kit, Lenora is considered a murderer by many in their small Maine community: when she was 17, Lenora's parents and sister were killed in the family's mansion, leaving her as the sole survivor. As Kit bonds with Lenora, she becomes obsessed with uncovering the truth about her family's deaths, and increasingly unsure of her client's innocence. Sager offers his usual array of jaw-dropping twists, which startle despite being fairly clued. Fans of Daphne du Maurier will enjoy this superior nail-biter. *Agent: Michelle Brower, Trellis Literary. (June)*

The Bone Riddle: An Alexa Glock Forensics Mystery

Sara E. Johnson. Poisoned Pen, $16.99 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-7282-5734-1

Johnson's transporting fourth entry featuring Alexa Glock (after 2022's *The Bone Track*) finds the New Zealand forensics expert in a burgeoning relationship with Auckland Det. Insp. Bruce Horne. Alexa's hopes for a deeper connection with him and his daughters are thwarted, though, when a high-profile case demands her attention: a decaying corpse is found inside a doomsday bunker on the estate of American billionaire Harlan

Quinn. While the general appearance of the cadaver matches descriptions of Harlan, his wife, Audrey insists that Harlan is alive and well and in Germany, and refuses to release any medical records. Alexa, though, identifies the body as Harlan's through dental records, and further investigation suggests he was strangled, leading Alexa to launch a murder investigation that casts suspicion on a number of people. Johnson expertly balances her lead's personal and professional lives and maintains nerve-shredding suspense throughout. This gives every indication that Alexa can sustain a long-running series. *Agent: Natalie Lakosil, Bradford Literary. (June)*

★ The Paperback Sleuth: Death in Fine Condition

Andrew Cartmel. Titan, $16.95 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-789098-94-5

Cartmel (the Vinyl Detective mysteries) has never been better than in this darkly funny series kickoff centered on London bookseller Cordelia Stanmer, a former addict who has fallen in love with vintage paperbacks and has no scruples about how she'll feed her growing collection. Cordelia often forges author signatures to jack up a book's resale value and offers bribes to church sale organizers for a first crack at rare volumes. While picking up weed at her dealer's house one afternoon, she glimpses a photo of a bookcase stuffed with rare crime novels and resolves to find out where the photo was taken, break in, and steal as many of the beautifully illustrated editions as she can. Her scheming hits an unexpected snag when she successfully makes away with the volumes—only to realize she's just robbed one of London's most notorious criminals, who sets out for revenge. Cordelia is a memorable, devilish antihero, and Cartmel's delightfully dexterous plotting bodes well for a sequel. Fans of Lynne Truss's Constable Twitten novels will find much to love. *(June)*

Flesh and Blood

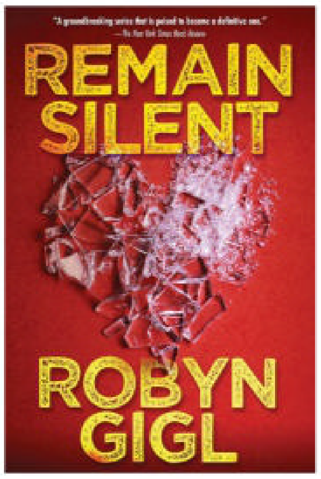
David Mark. Severn House, $31.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-4483-0937-5

A too-elaborate plot hampers Mark's 11th procedural featuring British Det. Sgt. Aector McAvoy (following 2022's *Blind Justice*). After a man who could be his twin is violently assaulted , McAvoy receives a call from his colleague, checking that the detective hasn't been wounded. McAvoy learns the assault occurred outside the home of his boss, Trish Pharaoh, and the victim was her boyfriend, Icelandic cop Thor Ingolfsson. The resemblance makes McAvoy wonder whether he was the intended target, and Pharaoh muddies the waters by slipping away from the crime scene before she can be questioned. A theory emerges that the attack might have been organized by serial killer Reuben Hollow, whom Pharaoh put behind bars. Most of Hollow's victims were "dealers and people-traffickers; sex pests and wife-beaters," but two were hard-to-explain one-offs—or so they appeared. As McAvoy digs deeper into the case, long-buried secrets from Pharaoh's past threaten to violently erupt. An exciting climax can't salvage the contrived, convenience-riddled plot that comes before it, and some lines (one character's boots make a noise "like a horse chewing mint") land with a thud. This entry comes in well below the standards Mark has set for the series. *(June)*

Remain Silent

Robyn Gigl. Kensington, $27 (352p) ISBN 978-1-4967-4176-9

Gigl's gripping third thriller featuring 37-year-old Cranford, N.J., lawyer Erin McCabe (after 2022's *Survivor's Guilt*) finds Erin caught between two cases that threaten to put her behind bars. Shortly after Erin's first meeting with a new client, the man is found murdered at his beachside home. Within hours, Erin is being interrogated by the police, who accuse her of killing the man after attempting to blackmail him with pictures of him dressed in women's clothing. Before long, several of the man's associates turn up dead as well. With circumstantial evidence piling up against her, Erin and fellow attorney Duane Swisher, a former FBI agent, begin their own investigation. Meanwhile, Erin takes on the case of a woman accused of abducting her child during a scorched-earth custody battle. To protect her client and the child, she refuses to reveal their whereabouts, thus risking imprisonment. Gigl—who, like her protagonist, is a lawyer and transgender woman—brings authenticity and depth to her characters, gracefully presenting LGBTQ issues to a mainstream audience via a satisfying mystery plot. This series deserves a long life. *Agent: Carrie Pestritto, Laura Dail Literary. (June)*



The Wrong Mother

Charlotte Duckworth. Hachette, $17.99 trade paper (358p) ISBN 978-1-5294-2300-6

This enjoyably twisty psychological thriller from Duckworth (*Unfollow Me*) plunges readers in into the turbulent life of 39-year-old Faye Miller. Desperate to escape her three-week-old son's father for initially unclear reasons, she's on the run without much in the way of a plan. Faye chooses to hide out in the tiny Norfolk village of Helston, where her late great-aunt once lived. Fate and the internet bring her together with Rachel Morris, a lonely 64-year-old woman advertising the rental of a "bright and spacious" spare room in her cottage. At first, Rachel—a former Girl Guide leader and long-standing member of Helston's annual bonfire night committee—appears as the picture of small-town hospitality. But before long, Faye begins to wonder how much she can trust her, and in narration that shifts back and forth between the young mother and older landlady, buried secrets from both emerge and threaten to combust. A handful of third-act coincidences strain credibility, but Duckworth skillfully metes out clues in the protagonists' personal histories that will send readers scurrying to revise their expectations. This sturdy page-turner beguiles to the end. *(June)*

★ A Stolen Child: A Maggie D'Arcy Mystery

Sarah Stewart Taylor. Minotaur, $28 (352p) ISBN 978-1-2508-2668-8

The opening to Stewart Taylor's stellar fourth Maggie D'Arcy adventure (after 2022's *The Drowning Sea*) finds the former Long Island detective back in uniform, having joined the Dublin police force so she can begin a new life in Ireland with her boyfriend and daughter. While responding to the murder of a reality TV star, Maggie and her new partner realize they'd responded to a call at the same location a few days earlier, only to have the victim send them away. Wracked with guilt and questioning whether she should have pressed further during her first call, Maggie learns that the victim also has a young child who's gone missing. With most of Maggie's colleagues consumed by another high-profile murder, Maggie heads up both the homicide and missing child investigations, eventually leading an extensive—and increasingly dangerous—nationwide hunt for the killer. Stewart Taylor keeps the plot tight and makes satisfying links between the two major cases, but her particular skill lies in the psychological depth with which she draws Maggie and her home life. Readers will be eager to follow the detective's future Irish exploits. *Agent: Esmond Harmsworth, Aevitas Creative Management. (June)*

Zero Days

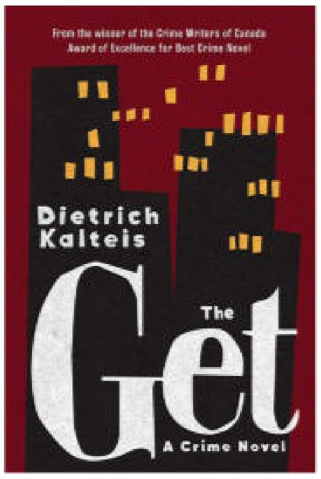
Ruth Ware. Scout, $29.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-9821-5529-2

This too-familiar thriller from Ware (*The It Girl*) centers on a woman devastated by her husband's murder and her emergence as the primary suspect. Married couple Jacintha Cross and Gabriel Medway operate Crossways Security, a London firm that stress-tests security systems. After an unsuccessful assignment, Jacintha returns home to find Gabriel's throat cut. Traumatized, she doesn't call the police immediately, which pegs her as a person of interest. The situation becomes even worse when the widow gets an email informing her that Gabriel recently insured his own life for a million pounds and named her his beneficiary. Jacintha, who harbors hard feelings about the police after enduring an abusive relationship with a cop, goes on the run while trying to identify who's behind the killing and why. Lackluster characterization and a shortage of surprises mar the cookie-cutter proceedings. Admirers of the author's typically fresh takes on thriller staples will hope for a return to form next time. *Agent: Eve White, Eve White Literary. (June)*

★ The Get

Dietrich Kalteis. ECW, $21.95 trade paper (230p) ISBN 978-1-77041-684-0

In this captivating, irreverent 1960s-set caper from Kalteis (*Under an Outlaw Moon*), small-time Toronto thugs Lenny Ovitz and Gabe Zoller make their living strong-arming store owners into paying protection money to their boss, Ernie Zimm. Having borrowed $200,000 from a shady boxing promoter to gain partial ownership of several slum tenements, Lenny and Gabe are stuck in the collections racket, evading undercover cops and fighting off rival gangs until they can pay off their debts. Their problems escalate when charismatic police detective Gary Evans tries his hand at seducing Lenny's estranged wife, Paulina, eager for information that could help bring down Zimm and his crew. Determined to avoid an expensive divorce, Lenny starts planning a heist that will ease his money troubles and get rid of his wife once and for all. Smooth plotting, vivid characters, and sharp dialogue (especially from the rough-edged leads) bolster this darkly comic story, which Kalteis shepherds to a hugely satisfying conclusion. Fans of Elmore Leonard and George Pelecanos will find much to enjoy. *(June)*


From the winner of the Crime Writers of Canada Award of Excellence for Best Crime Novel
Dietrich Kalteis
The Get
A Crime Novel

Honeymoon in Jail: An "H.P. Lovecraft, Detective" Novel

S.T. Joshi. Sarnath, $12.95 trade paper (196p) ISBN 979-8-8099-9151-3

Lovecraft scholar Joshi (the Joe Scintilla, PI series) turns the legendary horror author into a sleuth in this intriguing whodunit. Narrated by Lovecraft's wife, Sonia Greene, the story picks up when she and Lovecraft attend the 1934 wedding of anarchist writer James Morton (a real-life friend of Lovecraft's) to amateur journalist Pearl Merritt in Far Rockaway, N.Y. The celebration is marred by the murder of a woman on the rooftop of the hotel hosting the ceremony, a tragedy compounded by the arrest of the new Mrs. Morton, whom a witness placed at the scene around the time of the killing. Convinced of her innocence, Lovecraft, harnessing his teenage infatuation with Sherlock Holmes, investigates, aided by Greene, who hopes the case might strengthen their strained relationship. Joshi's extensive knowledge of his subject is a major asset, with Easter eggs aplenty for hardcore fans, and his choice to have Sonia narrate and provide perspective on her eccentric husband is an inspired choice. Lovecraftians will hope for a sequel. *(Self-published)*

SF/Fantasy/Horror

Thief Liar Lady

D.L. Soria. Del Rey, $27 (416p) ISBN 978-0-593-35805-4

Soria makes her adult debut (after the YA novel *Fire with Fire*, written as Destiny Soria) with a clever if occasionally slogging twist on "Cinderella." Ash Vincent, an orphaned scullery maid, hatches a plan with her stepfamily to con her way into becoming princess and thus secure fortunes for her stepsisters. She infiltrates the royal court of Solis as dazzling but demure Lady Aislinn under strict orders to charm Prince Everett, keeping him wrapped around her finger through illegal magic. But Aislinn has her own agenda, and things become increasingly precarious as war looms between Solis and neighboring country Eloria. Meanwhile, her growing feelings for and dangerous flirtations with Everett's best friend, the Elorian hostage prince, threaten to derail Aislinn's plans. As her careful lies slowly unravel, Aislinn becomes torn morally and romantically as she struggles to balance her two identities. It's a fun premise replete with espionage and just a touch of magic, but the plot is bogged down by overly involved political scheming and the ending is disappointingly rushed. Still, fans of retold fairy tales will be drawn in by this savvy upending of a classic character. *Agent: Taylor Haggerty, Root Literary. (July)*

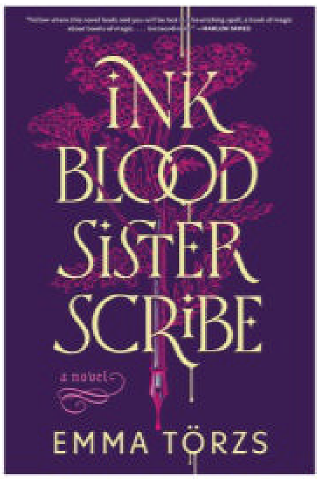
The Archive Undying

Emma Mieko Candon. Tordotcom, $28.99 (496p) ISBN 978-1-250-82154-6

The ambitious science fantasy that kicks off the Downworld Sequence trilogy from Candon (*Star Wars: Ronin*) immerses readers in a fascinating if sometimes disorienting world of AI gods, dissolute hermits, and fantastical biotech constructs. Years after the cataclysmic death of Iterate Fractal, the AI that once oversaw the city-state of Khuon Mo, rebellion is stirring against the Harbor, the police state that took over in its wake. Traumatized by his patron deity's death, former archivist Sunai chases oblivion, but when he inadvertently sleeps with a biotech researcher working for the Harbor, he finds himself inexorably drawn back into city life and toward old friends, all of whom have their own agendas. Inhabiting the Downworld universe is often a joy: Candon's fresh, vivid worldbuilding skillfully blends anime staples like giant robots and cigarette-smoking aunties with edgy SFF tropes like dying gods and legendary hybrid beasts. Though the emotional thread of trauma, guilt, and grief is well-executed, the narrative is written in an elaborate, often evasive style that may leave some readers feeling left behind by the plot. Still, fans of diverse, queer genre fiction seeking a challenge should take note. *(June)*

★ Ink Blood Sister Scribe

Emma Törzs. Morrow, $27.99 (416p) ISBN 978-0-06-325346-9



Törzs's spellbinding fantasy debut imagines a parallel Earth where gruesome magical spell books are written with the blood and bodies of people known as Scribes. Nicholas is tired of living in the gilded cage that is the Library, home to the world's largest collection of spellbooks, where he is routinely bled by his overbearing uncle, Richard Maxwell, to fulfill magical commissions. Elsewhere, Joanna Kalotay steadfastly guards a small collection of spellbooks of her own, barely leaving home and nightly setting protection charms to prevent detection. Meanwhile, her estranged sister, Esther, is constantly on the move, acting on a warning from their late father. She must relocate every year on November 2 "or the people who killed your mother will come for you, too. And not only you, Esther. They'll come for your sister." But when a mysterious note tells Esther it's time to finally return home to Joanna, she risks everything to reunite with her sister. Unraveling the twisty mysteries that connect Nicholas to the Kalotay sisters and dismantling the dark constraints on their lives keep both characters and readers guessing throughout. Meanwhile, threads of hope and love keep the grimly gorgeous worldbuilding from growing too dark. Törzs's lyrical, idiosyncratic prose (at one point, the sky is described as "so pale it seemed infected") elevates proceedings. This is a must-read. *Agent: Claudia Ballard, WME. (June)*

* * *

★ Many Worlds: or, The Simulacra

Edited by Cadwell Turnbull and Josh Eure. Radix, $24.95 trade paper (180p) ISBN 978-1-73771-843-7

This excellent anthology delves into an unsettling shared multiverse in which individuals struggle to understand a world being constantly edited around them. Project creator Turnbull's opening piece, "Notes on the Form of the Simulacra," serves as an explanation of the setup in the form of an analysis of a forum in which people share their experiences of cities changing names and familiar people shifting roles, and posit the existence of an entity they call The Simulacrum behind it all. The remaining 13 stories, arranged to provide a smooth expansion of the reader's understanding of the setting, take various perspectives. Some protagonists passively perceive the strangeness of the world, as in Theodore McCombs's "The Phantom of the Marley Valley High Auditorium for the Arts," in which students disappear each year during the high school's spring show, and then, in K.W. Onley's "And So, What Do You Know?," are hounded by investigators trying to study them. Others, like the protagonist in Darkly Lem's "Blink" are more aware of their identities as unwilling travelers between worlds. Taken as a whole, this exhibits the best of shared-world writing: diverse settings and distinctive voices grounded in a core worldbuilding concept that, in this case, provokes both paranoia and wonder. Readers will be wowed. *(June)*

* * *

If Found, Return to Hell

Em X. Liu. Solaris, $12.99 trade paper (176p) ISBN 978-1-78618-992-9

Liu's bumpy, Kafkaesque debut contemporary fantasy kicks off when Wen Mingyan, a despairing, burned-out intern at One Wizard, a mystical insurance company, gets a mysterious call from client Shine Meng Junlei, who claims he blacked out and woke up to discover a mysterious talisman on the wall of his room. Leaping at a chance to get off phone duty, Mingyan agrees to investigate. They discover that Shine has been possessed by Wang Ran, a demon prince who refuses to leave his fun new body and face his terrifying father, King Death. Though this is above Mingyan's pay grade, they unwisely promise to help and are sucked into a power struggle full of demons, grim reapers, and contractual obligations. Unfortunately, the growing intimacy between Mingyan and Shine/Wang Ran feels both elided over and forced by the needs of the plot, rather than arising naturally out of character. Those who enjoy non-European SFF settings and second person POV will want to check this out, but others will find that it skips a few too many steps to get to the now well-explored point that capitalist bureaucracy is the real hell. *Agent: Penelope Burns, Gelfman Schneider. (June)*

* * *

The Ghosts of Trappist

K.B. Wagers. Harper Voyager, $30 (560p) ISBN 978-0-06-311516-3

This sentimental space opera, the third in Wagers's NeoG series (after *Hold Fast Through the Fire*), revisits the crew of Near-Earth Orbital Guard Interceptor *Zuma's Ghost*, gleefully mixing business with pleasure. While defending their championship in the Boarding Games and digging into the sudden appearance of "ghost" (uncrewed) ships in the Trappist solar system, the crew also works through a ton of emotional baggage: Lt. Max Carmichael is pressured by her prestigious Naval family to quit the lower status Guard; Chief Petty Officer Altandai "Jenks" Khan worries that her canine robot, Doge, is developing impossible abilities like active learning and human feeling; and Ensign Nell "Sapphi" Zika is confronted by a toxic ex-partner whose work on a classified AI project brings him into unwanted proximity. Meanwhile someone (or something) is sending secret messages and killer spacesuits after the crew. Wagers lavishes a lot of attention on the internal conflicts and interpersonal frictions that accompany the more standard space battles and computer hacking intrigues. Readers who enjoy both the glitz of space opera and the conviviality of family dramas will be rewarded with as many embraces as EMP blaster pulses. *Agent: Andy Zack, Zack Company. (June)*

Caged Ocean Dub

Dare Segun Falowo. Android, $19.99 trade paper (260p) ISBN 978-1-958121-27-6

Falowo's transporting debut collection combines the fantastical, the spiritual, and the everyday to vivid effect. In 21 stories, all set in Nigeria, Falowo seamlessly merges Nigerian culture with elements of speculative fiction and fantasy. In "Kikelomo Ultrasheen," for example, a girl learns how to braid hair from her salon-owning mother, only to grow up to discover she has been "chosen by Onidiri," meaning she has the ability to bring about healing and destruction through her hands. Many of the stories deal with gender, examining the traditional domestic roles of women and inverting them such that these roles hold a sometimes dangerous amount of power. "October in Eran Riro" exemplifies this: its protagonist, October, has a mystical "olowosibi" in her hand that gives her great skill at cooking. It's not until she gets a job at a fancy and frightening restaurant that she learns about the bloody sacrifice that makes her food so delicious. Though some of the more abstract tales, including "Sonskins" and "The Visions of Atanda Ekun," prove difficult to interpret, readers will be content to let the poetic prose wash over them. Falowo is a writer to watch. *Agent: Bleke van Aggelen, African Literary Agency. (June)*

On Earth As It Is on Television

Emily Jane. Hyperion Avenue, $27.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-368-09299-9

Jane's cutesy debut takes the old sci-fi motif of first alien contact to a far-fetched new frontier. Mysterious spaceships briefly hover over Earth's big cities before disappearing without a trace, leaving humanity baffled. Three story lines humorously trace human and feline reactions in the fallout. Long-suffering husband Blaine bemusedly supports his wife, Anne, who he calls "superwoman"; two TV-addicted children; and their grumpy cat, Mr. Meow-Mitts, on a haphazard road trip to Disney World. Meanwhile, Oliver Smith, who's been in a coma for decades following a terrible car accident while trying to save his sister from an abusive stepfather, abruptly wakes and is adopted by a telepathic cat, Bouchard. And spoiled Malibu teen Heather chafes against the cheesy lifestyle her wealthy TV producer stepdad Jack P and his cat, Bastet, provide her. When the alien ships—piloted by meerkat-like beings who mistake Earth's cats for its dominant species—return, these humans gradually achieve a joint acceptance of otherness. Feline psychology plays a pivotal role in Jane's whimsical if somewhat heavy-handed admonition that even when humans seem strangest to one another, they have more in common than they think. It's fun, but over the top. *Agent: Holly Root, Root Literary. (June)*

The Master of Samar

Melissa Scott. Candlemark & Gleam, $22.95 trade paper (340p) ISBN 978-1-952456-16-9

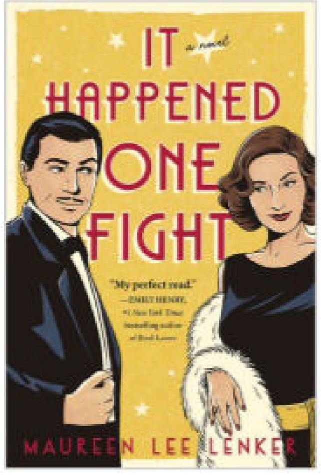
Lambda Literary award winner Scott (*Shadow Man*) sets a solid mystery plot within an aristocratic, Victorian-esque commonwealth held together by magical curses. Traveling cursebreaker Gil Irichels, of the Samar family, was cast out by his kin years before the start of the book and has no intention of ever returning to the Samar estate. Then, thanks to the family curse, a "litany of disaster" strikes, leaving the rest of the Samar line wiped out in the course of just one generation. Gil reluctantly inherits the title of Master of Samar and must return to his childhood home to settle estate matters. When the family curse sets its sight on Gil, he takes on his most personal cursebreaking case yet. To stay alive, he must first uncover the curse's mysterious origins. With the help of his lover, feral mage Envar Cassi, and bodyguard, swordswoman Arak min'Aroi, Gil discovers that the Samar curse is inextricably tied to the survival of the commonwealth itself. Scott hits all the expected beats, and her dark magic system keeps the stakes high. Fans of Victorian fantasy will want to check this out. *(June)*

Romance/Erotica

It Happened One Fight

Maureen Lee Lenker. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $16.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-1-72826-788-3

Entertainment Weekly writer Lenker debuts with a delightful love letter to the screwball comedy that doubles as an exploration of Hollywood's golden age. Lone wolf Joan Davis (an homage to both Joan Crawford and Bette Davis) has clawed her way to stardom from Dust Bowl Oklahoma, rising above both early career bumps that earned her the label of "box-office poison" and the ire of gossip columnists. Now her engagement to British heartthrob Monty Smyth should cement her status as "Queen of Hollywood." However, thanks to a prank gone wrong from her he-man frequent costar Dash Howard (inspired by Clark Gable), Joan discovers that she's already married—to Dash. The studio moves their final picture together to Reno, where they'll be eligible for a speedy divorce, but when their explosive on-screen chemistry becomes an off-screen romance, Davis and Dash wonder if they should stay married after all. The setting is tremendously fun and well realized, and though Dash's petulant on-set behavior can be off-putting (and he never sufficiently atones), enemies-to-lovers fans will enjoy their dynamic. Unfortunately, a climactic revelation doesn't quite get its



due and is brushed over on the way to a happy ending. Still, there's plenty to enjoy here—especially for film buffs. *Agent: Taylor Haggerty, Root Literary. (July)*

The Seven Year Slip

Ashley Poston. Berkley, $17 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-593-33650-2

With this poignant, magic-infused contemporary romance, Poston (*The Dead Romantics*) explores love, grief, and the courage it takes to create one's "own adventure." As a publicist for a boutique Manhattan book publisher, Clementine lives for work, splitting her limited personal time between her parents and her coworkers, and grieving the recent death of her larger-than-life, Auntie Mame-esque aunt, Analea. Analea left Clementine her "century-old" Upper East Side apartment, which she often described as a place where "time pinched in on itself," but she also warned Clementine not to fall in love within its walls. Clementine learns that her aunt's kooky stories are true when she wakes up to find young chef hopeful, Iwan, also in residence—though he's living seven years in the past. What follows is an easily flowing and often unpredictable romance. The magical element adds a cool twist on the gradually building central relationship and Poston's depictions of grief ring especially true and are sure to tug at readers' heartstrings. This is an emotional delight. *Agent: Holly Root, Root Literary (June)*

The Bookshop by the Bay

Pamela M. Kelley. Griffin, $17 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-86161-0

Kelley (*Nashville Dreams*) delivers a sweet but underdeveloped small-town contemporary that brings life-altering changes to two middle-aged best friends and their adult daughters. Lawyer Jessica Coleman's 30-year marriage to Parker lost its romance long before the start of the book, but their shared life in Charleston, N.C., keeps the couple from talking divorce—until Parker's secretary, just a few years older than their 30-year-old daughter, Caitlin, becomes pregnant with his child. Needing space, Jess flees to her childhood home in Cape Cod to spend time with her lifelong best friend, Alison Page. Caitlin, who needs help finding direction in her life, joins her. Their arrival immediately brings changes for the good all around: with Jess's help, Alison's able to realize her dream of owning a bookshop; her daughter, Julia, becomes close with Caitlin; and all four women find strength in each other to reach for real happiness—including real love. Walking the line between women's fiction and romance, this cute, summery tale offers plenty of scenic views but stays fairly surface level when it comes to emotional development. As a result, readers will struggle to fully buy in to the women's stories. Still, it's an easy pick to throw in a beach bag. *Agent: Christina Hogrebe, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (June)*

The Sweetheart List

Jill Shalvis. Avon, $18.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-06-323569-4

Bestseller Shalvis's adorable fourth Sunrise Cove romance (after *The Backup Plan*) matches a surly bartender with a skeptical baker. After a bad breakup, Harper Shaw relocates to Lake Tahoe with her dog and her mother's recipes in tow. She's excited to open a bakery and make a fresh start—and it's just icing on the cake that the building she rents for her business is right next to the bar owned by her hot landlord, Bodie Campbell. Sexy and surly Bodie is not looking for a relationship, so his repeated run-ins with his gorgeous and too-nice neighbor grate. Things get more complicated when Harper takes in teenage runaway Ivy, to whom she provides a roof and baking lessons unaware that Ivy has ulterior motives for visiting town that have everything to do with Bodie. The trio slowly become a makeshift family, with both Harper and Ivy fully embraced by Bodie's rambunctious, close-knit clan—but what will happen when Ivy's secrets come to light? This charming tale is just as welcoming as the cozy small-town community within which it's set, and Shalvis hits the perfect blend of sweet and spicy. Readers will be thrilled. *Agent: Annelise Robey, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (June)*

A Love Catastrophe

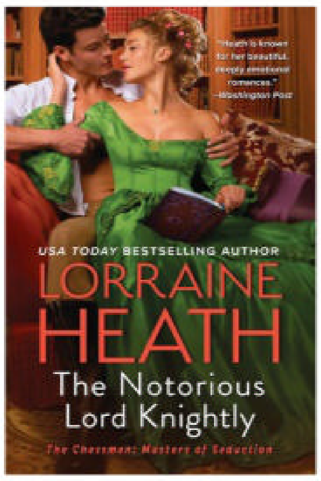
Helena Hunting. Forever, $16.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-1-5387-2006-6

Hunting (*Make a Wish*) tugs at the heartstrings with this thoroughly charming and unexpectedly deep contemporary romance. When the mother of NHL data analyst and dog person Miles Thorn is admitted to the hospital for an extended stay, Miles must take in her finicky feline, Prince Francis. The search for a cat sitter leads him to Kitty Heart, social media star and owner of the Kitty Whisperer. Animal lover Kitty feels lust at first sight with handsome Miles, and as their romance builds, she gets caught up in his world, including house parties at NHL players' homes. But when Kitty trips and falls on Miles's dog during a walk, an onlooker edits a film of the accident to make her fall appear deliberate and her followers turn on her, calling her an "animal abuser." The subplot about Miles's mother, who is diagnosed with early-onset dementia, adds some hefty emotional weight, but Hunting leavens the serious moments with a number of hilarious scenes, including one where Kitty must evict a wandering baby raccoon from a hockey player's house. This fresh, fun, and at times heartbreaking tale will stay with readers long after the last page is turned. *Agent: Kimberly Brower, Brower Literary. (June)*

★ The Notorious Lord Knightly

Lorraine Heath. Avon, $9.99 mass market (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-311467-8

A jilted woman gets revenge on her former fiancé in Heath's delicious second Chessmen: Masters of Seduction Victorian romance (after *The Counterfeit Scoundrel*). Regina Leyland fled to the continent after Arthur Pennington, Earl of Knightly, left her at the altar. Five years later, she returns to London—and she's no longer the wide-eyed innocent she once was. She anonymously publishes a thinly veiled account of a villainous rogue she calls "Lord K." Londoners quickly become obsessed with the novel, and Arthur's furious to be at the center of the gossip. But after Regina refuses Arthur's plea to write a retraction—and tells him of the daughter, Arianna, she had during her


USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
LORRAINE HEATH
The Notorious Lord Knightly
The Chessmen: Masters of Seduction

travels (and who she claims is the product of a continental affair)—he realizes how much pain he caused her and reforms, even offering to help Regina snare a suitable marriage prospect. Though Regina remains conflicted, as the pair work together she remembers why she fell in love with Arthur in the first place—and he reveals the impossible choice that led to calling off their wedding. Regina is admirably resilient, and the slowly rekindling love between her and Arthur will make readers swoon. This is second-chance romance done right. *Agent: Robin Rue, Writers House. (June)*

Charm City Rocks

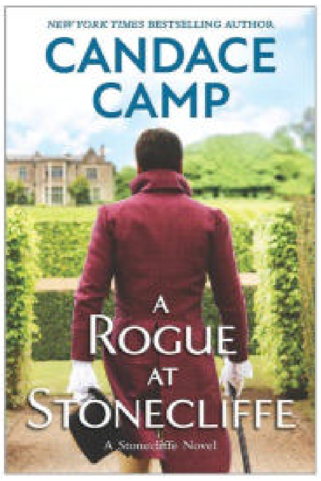
Matthew Norman. Dell, $17 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-0-593-49983-2

In this gentle romance, Norman (*All Together Now*) takes a thoughtful look at finding love in one's 40s and how it balances against family, career, and other obligations. Cheerful single father Billy Perkins is content living in his Baltimore apartment over a record store, teaching music, and raising his son, Caleb, who's almost ready to head off to college. But Caleb thinks his father needs more love in his life and engineers a meeting between Billy and his longtime celebrity crush Margot Hammer, former drummer for the all-girl rock band Burnt Flowers. After some initial awkwardness, Margot and Billy realize they enjoy each other's company, and embark on a quietly satisfying relationship. Then a viral performance at a local bar thrusts Margot back into the spotlight and her newfound happiness is threatened by both old colleagues and the reappearance of her actor ex-husband. With Billy and Margot forced to reevaluate their goals and priorities, their time together may be cut short. Both protagonists come with plenty of baggage, whether it's Billy's attachment to the status quo, or Margot's checkered rock star past, and the way their chemistry pushes them both out of their comfort zones seals the deal on this romance. It's a joy. *Agent: Jesseca Salky, Salky Literary. (June)*

A Rogue at Stonecliffe

Candace Camp. Canary Street, $9.99 mass market (384p) ISBN 978-1-335-51310-6

A former spy risks his cold heart to protect the woman he never forgot in bestseller Camp's immersive second Stonecliffe Regency romance (after *An Affair at Stonecliffe*). Sloane Rutherford is blackmailed into agreeing to spy for the Crown to prevent his beloved Annabeth Winfield from learning that her father is a traitor working for the French. Twelve years after this intrigue abruptly ended their affair, Sloane has a successful business in London—until his warehouse burns down. He initially believes his business rival is responsible, and fears the man will target Annabeth next, because she's still the thing he cares about most in the world. Annabeth, now engaged to the very proper Nathan Dunbridge, is shocked when Sloane reappears in her life to protect her and is distrustful of his concern, believing he callously abandoned her. The danger to Annabeth increases when she and her maid Judy are kidnapped, but the two manage to escape, and Sloane learns that "Judy" is really Verity, a fellow spy hired to find a supposed confession written by Annabeth's late father before he died. As the mystery escalates, attraction sizzles and romantic angst mounts between the leads. Readers will be hooked. *Agent: Maria Carvainis, Maria Carvainis Agency. (June)*



Phoebe

Minerva Spencer. Crooked Sixpence, $9.95 trade paper (262p) ISBN 978-1-951662-53-0

Spencer (*The Boxing Baroness*) sets the tone for her Bellamy Sisters series with an engaging Regency love story in which the primary hurdles are the heroine's pride and her family's prejudice. Lady Phoebe Bellamy, who is sensible but haughty and sometimes considered plain, does her best to manage the household in the face of her father's propensity for squandering their fortune. Despite her best efforts, however, the family will soon own nothing but their titles. Meanwhile, Paul Needham, a newly made viscount, is one of the richest men in England, but his surly, standoffish reputation precedes him. He dislikes society, but he requires both a respectable country home and a wife if he hopes to carve out a place in it for his illegitimate daughter. When Needham looks into renting Phoebe's family estate, the Bellamy sisters find their parents ready to marry any one of them off to solve their financial woes. So Phoebe heroically spares her sisters and saves the family fortunes by proposing to the viscount herself—not expecting she may actually fall in love. There are hints of "Beauty and the Beast" to the sultry dynamic that arises between the leads as they navigate the complexities of Regency social status. Spencer creates characters worth rooting for. Readers will be eager to see Phoebe's sisters find their own matches next. *(Self-published)*

Comics

Arca

Van Jensen and Jesse Lonergan. IDW, $16.99 (176p) ISBN 978-1-68405-998-0

Jensen (The Flash series) and Lonergan (*Ghosts of Science Past*) craft an immersive futuristic setting for this sharp, socially canny sci-fi thriller. Teenage Effie (short for Persephone) has grown up on the *Arca*, a space ark containing the last survivors of humanity. Young people, dubbed Settlers, serve the older Citizens who run the ship while preparing for the future colonization of a planet. Disobedience and questioning are strictly punished, and Effie has to hide that she's learned the forbidden art of reading. As she begins to doubt the teachings of her elders, she becomes the center of an uprising against the *Arca*'s stratified hierarchy. Meanwhile, flashbacks reveal the machinations behind the Citizens' supposedly noble project to save humanity. Lonergan's fluid art and warm colors breathe life into the high-tech *Arca* and its many environments, from the Citizens' artificial-sun-drenched vineyards and tennis courts to the Settlers' crowded dorms and the dank jungle of pipes in the sanitation area. The plot moves quickly through twists and turns, building to a climax of all-out rebellion. Fans of smart dystopian storytelling will want to get on board. *Agent: Lucy Cleland, Kneerim & Williams. (July)*

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★ Minami's Lover

Shungiku Uchida, trans. from the Japanese by H. Paige. Fantagraphics, $29.99 (200p) ISBN 978-1-68396-760-6

Uchida's classic manga, first serialized in the underground Japanese magazine *Garo*, sketches the outline of a cute rom-com fantasy, then digs into murky psychological territory. Chiyomi, a high school girl, has gone missing, and only her boyfriend, Minami, knows the truth: she has inexplicably shrunken to six inches high and is living in his bedroom. The young couple reaffirm their love and even work out a sex life of sorts, but Chiyomi's reduced stature inevitably alters their relationship. Minami feeds his girlfriend, sews tiny clothes, figures out ways for her to use the toilet and take a bath, and haltingly develops empathy: "She's so tiny, yet... she's a real person," he marvels. As time passes, however, he begins to tire of having to care for a vulnerable doll-woman. Their situation becomes a funhouse-mirror fable about the responsibilities and anxieties that come with a committed relationship. Uchida's loose, rounded art feels effortlessly appealing; she seems to delight in drawing the winsome, often-nude Chiyomi and her miniature accessories. Darkly funny, sexually frank, and unexpectedly heartbreaking, this slippery parable defies expectations at every turn. *(June)*

The Amazing Camel Toe

Claire Dunlan, trans. from the French by Celina Bernstein. Black Panel, $24.99 (120p) ISBN 978-1-990521-11-9

With the rough energy of a kiss-off note scribbled on a cocktail napkin, Euro-cartoonist Dunlan scrawls the origin story of The Amazing Camel Toe, a feminist superhero and "vigilante in panther leggings." Constance, a frustrated commercial illustrator, vents her aggravations by creating the cringily named heroine, who, in Constance's imagination, beats up misogynists, berates celebrities accused of assault, and has the power to make cat-callers see the faces of their disappointed mothers on the women they leer at. The script hits a predictable rhythm: Constance experiences sexism, draws a minicomic imagining Camel Toe's biff-pow response, and shares it with her appreciative friends. In between, she deals with workplace aggravations, hygiene mishaps, her inadequately supportive boyfriend, and her friend's punk band. The loose black-and-white art, which consists mostly of angular figures and close-ups of fiercely expressive faces, can be vibrant and funny, but often runs utilitarian. The style's reminiscent of the fearless, raunchy feminist minicomics of the 1990s zine heyday. Dunlan doesn't break new ground here, but Camel Toe offers a jolt of old-school catharsis updated for the #MeToo era. It's a breezy option for nostalgic grrrl power fans. *Agent: Sylvain Coissard, Sylvain Coissard Agency. (May)*

Stringer: A Crime Thriller

Patrick Kindlon and Paul Tucker. Image, $22.99 (168p) ISBN 978-1-5343-2488-6

In this buzzy shaggy-dog story, a clueless small-fry dealer gets swept up in the deadly games played by more dangerous operators. Setting the action in 1983, Kindlon (*Frontiersman*) takes full advantage of the era's laissez-faire approach to drug use, illicit items on planes, and tracking crooks across borders. His schlubby, coked-up antihero is Tim, who supplements his day job as racket-stringer (apparently a real gig) for bullying tennis pro Billy by dealing drugs on the European pro circuit. For no good reason, Tim is chosen by cartel boss Alejandro to smuggle a duffel bag of cocaine to America; price of refusal or failure being gruesome death, of course. Little about the crime narrative gels, with readers likely as confused as Tim by the happenstance and dumb luck that dogs him. But as Tim's bumbling from one self-inflicted crisis to another strings along an increasing number of villains who want to kill him, the reader's attention is likely to wander from the serio-comic narrative to just take in the jet-set circus of traveling depravity stocked with "barely-functioning drug addicts and retired war criminals," as Tim quips. Tucker's frenetic art is a bit crabbed, but at times breaks into incredible eye-catching spreads, like Tim's turmoil depicted as a spinning Lumiere or the wealthy crowd at a match rendered as Boschian monsters. While frequently nonsensical, this graphic novel's speed and chaotic good humor make up the difference. *(Apr.)*

Nonfiction

Blowback: A Warning to Save Democracy from the Next Trump

Miles Taylor. Atria, $30 (336p) ISBN 978-1-6680-1598-8

Taylor, the former Homeland Security official who anonymously denounced the Trump administration in 2019's *A Warning*, returns with a mixed-bag thought experiment on what would happen if the "Make America Great Again movement does the unthinkable and retakes the White House." Noting that Trump got pushback from the "adults" in the room, Taylor claims that those guardrails would not be present in a second term. Even if a "savvier successor," rather than Trump himself, wins the presidency, distrust of the federal bureaucracy and the instinct to distort reality will rule the day. Taylor identifies numerous areas of concern, including an October 2020 executive order that would have allowed Trump "to strip large parts of the federal workforce of their employment protections." Though President Biden repealed the order, it could be revived by Trump or a "Trump-like figure," leading to a "mass exodus" of competent, experienced, and law-abiding officials. Throughout, Taylor interweaves snapshots of his life before and after he went public as the author of *A Warning*, revealing how his relationships and mental health suffered. Unfortunately, the book's rhetorical flourishes, including a scene set in 2019 in which Taylor suggests that Trump was about to push the "nuclear button" in the Oval Office, then reveals he was simply ordering a Diet Coke, undermine its core message. This is a disappointment. *(July)*

24 Hours in Charlottesville: An Oral History of the Stand Against White Supremacy

Nora Neus. Beacon, $26.95 (192p) ISBN 978-0-8070-1192-8

That the 2017 Unite the Right rally—in which "hundreds of white supremacists and neo-Nazis" paraded through the streets of Charlottesville, Va., shouting "Jews will not replace us!"—descended into "extreme violence" should not have been a surprise, according to this visceral account of the protest and its aftermath. Drawing on dozens of interviews with journalists, residents, and activists, CNN producer Neus (coauthor, *Muhammad Najem, War Reporter*) reveals that police and municipal officials ignored repeated warnings that people might get hurt and seemed to offer more accommodations to the rally's organizers than to counterprotesters. Interviewees also delve into the city's racial dynamics ("It's a very beautiful place, physically, with a very ugly underside, of poverty, inequality") and the "very whitewashed version of American history" taught at the University of Virginia. Some of the book's most powerful testimony comes from the mother of Heather Heyer, who was killed when a white supremacist slammed his car into a crowd of counterprotesters. Neus's ground-up approach paints the violence as a slow-motion catastrophe that could have been avoided, though the free speech issues involved get somewhat short shrift. Still, it's a moving and frequently enraging look at how the tragedy unfolded. *(July)*

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STAFF 161 NONSTOP!

A 1973 photo of a New York City subway train tagged by graffiti artist Staff161, as seen in Alan Ket's arresting history The Wide World of Graffiti *(reviewed on p. 56).*

Brooding over Bloody Revenge: Enslaved Women's Lethal Resistance

Nikki M. Taylor. Cambridge Univ., $24.95 (248p) ISBN 978-1-00-927684-9

"Enslaved women were not always willing to resist slavery covertly or nonviolently," according to this intriguing compendium of "lethal slave resistance." Howard University historian Taylor (*Driven Toward Madness*) spotlights women throughout colonial and antebellum America who were both willing and able to murder their enslavers, either on their own or as leaders of an insurrection plot. According to one historian Taylor cites, "enslaved men who murdered acted out of impulse or momentary anger," while women "used a higher degree of premeditation, which made them more effective resistors ultimately." Drawing on legal records and newspaper coverage, Taylor unearths the stories of Phillis and Phoebe, who slowly poisoned their owner in Charlestown, Mass., in the 1750s; Rose Butler, who led a conspiracy to burn down her master's house in 1818 Manhattan; Richmonder Jane Williams, who used a hatchet to dispatch her mistress and mistress's baby in 1852; and Nelly, who acted in conjunction with her daughter and grandchildren to kill their rural Virginian enslaver on Christmas Eve 1856. In rigorous detail, Taylor documents the privations that enslaved women endured, from hunger to sexual abuse, and theorizes on the motivations of those who committed acts of violence. The result is a cogent reconsideration of long-held assumptions about the gendered experience of American slavery. *(July)*

The Last Ride of the Pony Express: My 2,000-Mile Horseback Journey into the Old West

Will Grant. Little, Brown, $30 (336p) ISBN 978-0-316-42231-4

Journalist Grant debuts with a thoughtful

[Q&A]

PW Talks with Oliver Franklin-Wallis

Trash Talk

In *Wasteland* (Hachette, July; reviewed on p. 53), *GQ* editor Franklin-Wallis examines what happens to garbage after it's thrown away.

Why is the problem of waste so often overlooked?

Waste is a gross subject. When I tell people what my book is about, some are grossed out. But it's an issue that affects everyone. Take food waste—it's responsible for up to 10% of all carbon emissions. If we can cut that, we can help save the planet and feed billions of people. When put that way, it's insane how little we're doing about it.

© JAMIE DREW

What do you consider the biggest failures of the waste disposal industry?

Waste is always something we've treated as "out of sight, out of mind." As a result, so much of the dubious activity—dumping waste on the Global South, toxic pollution, etc.—goes on without us seeing it. When we do see it, businesses use greenwashing techniques like playing up their recycling efforts to distract from their own wastefulness and pass blame onto consumers. The thing about waste is that it's the most visible pollution there is. If we can't deal with waste, which we can see and touch and smell, how can we expect to tackle the invisible emissions driving the climate crisis?

You mentioned that corporations pass blame onto consumers, how might consumers push back?

Partly by recognizing the truth about waste, which is that the biggest producers are industry. The idea that washing out yogurt containers or buying coffee in refillable cups is going to counteract the billions of tons of industrial waste produced by mining companies is crazy. That doesn't mean we shouldn't recycle, but it does mean that we should be pressuring companies and governments to take meaningful action. This includes making fewer plastic items, ensuring recyclables are actually recycled, and confronting the idea that the biggest waste is buying stuff we don't need.

How can individuals combat greenwashing?

By confronting false narratives. Coca-Cola, for example, has been breaking its recycling pledges since the 1990s. But too often we see the big press release about the pledge and forget about it. It's the same thing with climate change; if we can't force corporations to stick to their promises, we're going to be in trouble, fast.

How do you remain positive given the problems you outline?

It's in meeting the activists and researchers and entrepreneurs on the ground trying to make a difference. I started this book in 2019, and the change since then has been astonishing. The awareness of fashion waste, for example, has hugely changed behaviors and kick-started a global thrifting movement. Huge companies have started talking seriously about zero-waste initiatives.

—Michael Zimmerman

and entertaining account of his five-month trip along the length of the 19th-century overland mail route from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento, Calif. Launched in 1860, the Pony Express consisted of a series of way stations spread across 2,000 miles and spaced 10 to 20 miles apart, between which horseback riders carried mail in a relay system. Retracing this route with two horses, Badger and Chicken Fry, Grant evocatively describes the Great Plains of Nebraska, the sagebrush steppe of Wyoming, the Great Basin of Utah, and other geographic landmarks, and reflects on the damage "inflicted" on the western landscape by "modernization." He takes note of family farms abandoned in the face of industrial agriculture's ascendancy and Las Vegas's campaign to purchase "all the water in northern Arizona," but also finds rewarding connections with farmers, cattlemen, amateur historians, migrant sheep herders, and others he meets along the trail. "The pioneer spirit of the West runs close to the surface of the modern landscape," he writes. Enriched by Grant's deep knowledge of the West, matter-of-fact prose, and colorful character sketches, this is a rewarding ride. *(July)*

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Parachute Women: Marianne Faithfull, Marsha Hunt, Bianca Jagger, Anita Pallenberg, and the Women Behind the Rolling Stones

Elizabeth Winder. Hachette, $29 (320p) ISBN 978-1-500-5958-9

Poet Winder (*Marilyn in Manhattan*) paints a fascinating portrait of Marianne Faithfull, Marsha Hunt, Bianca Jagger, and Anita Pallenberg, four women who styled, wrote lyrics for, and in equal measure enraptured and enraged the Rolling Stones. Actors, models, and artists in their own right, the women helped catapult the British lads into the spotlight, styling them from their own wardrobes and introducing them to film directors, acclaimed writers, and high-society elites. But they also became targets for the band members' frustrations and insecurities, including how Pallenberg's relationship with Brian Jones—and its media attention—stirred up jealousy in Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, with whom she went on to have a

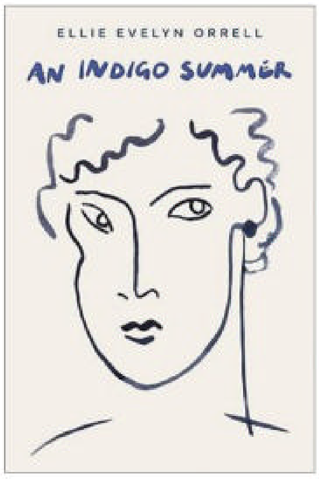
13-year relationship. Winder traces how the band shot to popularity even as the women's public images nose-dived, as when a drug raid at Richards's house found Faithfull, the only woman with the band at the time, naked under a bearskin rug: "Sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll became an icon, and Marianne became… a symbol for the general moral degeneracy." Winder's renderings of fiery, messy love affairs, bonds and betrayals, and vicious rivalry are backed up by keenly described historical background and an expert understanding of 1960s and '70s rock culture. The result is a wild ride worthy of rock's heyday. *(July)*

* * *

An Indigo Summer

Ellie Evelyn Orrell. Calon, $19 (168p) ISBN 978-1-915279-07-1

Artist Orrell debuts with a lyrical and moving account of the summer she and her mother spent grieving her maternal grandfather. After her grandfather died, Orrell returned to her native Wales from university in Scotland to link up with her mother, who shared the painstaking indigo dyeing techniques she'd learned in Japan, intending it as a framework for and respite from their shared grief. "I can't imagine that I will ever lose a sense of wonder on seeing this entirely magical transformation," Orrell writes of watching the indigo oxidize and stain fabrics blue. The author's return to Wales also prompted reflection about the relationship between the landscape of her childhood and those who live there: "I think about how children at school were referred to under their farm names in place of family names." Both an insightful meditation on homecoming and a testament to art's healing properties—complete with occasional sketches and photographs—Orrell's dazzling debut is as rich as indigo itself. Fans of Krista Tippett and Katherine May will be enthralled. *(July)*



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A Pity Party Is Still a Party: A Feel-Good Guide to Feeling Bad

Chelsea Harvey Garner. Harper Wave, $30 (272p) ISBN 978-0-063-08241-0

"Pain is part of the human experience… not a sign of failure, weakness, or spiritual disfavor," writes psychotherapist Garner in her wise debut. Despite a culture of "anti-emotionality" that dismisses strong feelings as useless or illogical, the author notes, the full spectrum of emotions (including painful ones) is central to a rich life, and processing them, especially in groups, can spur healing. In brief essays, Garner explores ways of managing sorrow and melancholy, probing the ills of emotional repression (ignoring feelings "cuts us off from important messages our body is trying to communicate"), why it can be healthy to cry around others ("relationships require responsiveness"), and how to decide whether to trust another person with vulnerable feelings ("Are they consistent? Are their words and actions aligned?"). Intercut are bits of levity in the form of, for instance, a "Crying Bingo" card (squares list "on an Ikea display couch" or "at the DMV"), along with questions intended to foster connection to one's emotions. Laced with wry humor ("Sure, life is beautiful, but good vibes only? In this economy?"), Garner's approach to emotional health is permissive without being overly self-indulgent—readers can feel their feelings without getting consumed by them, she makes clear. This is one for the feelers who need a hand. *(July)*

* * *

Never Give Up

Tom Brokaw. Random House, $27.99 (160p) ISBN 978-0-593-59637-1

In this affable memoir, former NBC Nightly News anchor Brokaw (*The Fall of Richard Nixon*) draws a line from his parents' perseverance through world wars and the Great Depression through to his own values. "I thank God for their enduring legacy of quiet courage and common persistence," he writes, focusing especially on the latter. Brokaw recounts Red and Jean's courtship and reflects on the work ethic he gleaned from them, masterfully bringing them to life through fond recollections—he writes of his mother excitedly waking him the morning after Harry Truman won the 1948 presidential election (to which he attributes his "lifelong journalistic passion for politics") as if it happened yesterday, and touchingly recalls a radio tribute to his father on the day of his funeral, effectively giving the talkative Red "the last word" on his own life. Photographs woven throughout the text, including an image of Red's watch with a small picture of Jean on the face, further enhance the sense of tenderness. Brokaw constructs this memorable family history with all the concision and color of a good journalistic profile. It's hard not to be moved. *(June)*

* * *

Supermajority: The Year the Supreme Court Divided America

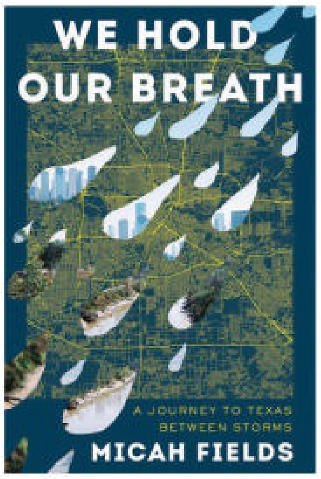
Michael Waldman. Simon & Schuster, $29.99 (400p) ISBN 978-1-6680-0606-1

Waldman (*The Fight to Vote*), president and CEO of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, delivers a persuasive analysis of the Supreme Court's 2021–2022 term and how "decades of organized politics" brought it to a "point of judicial extremism and overreach." During the cultural revolutions of the 1950s and '60s, chief justice Earl Warren led the court's efforts to expand and protect civil rights, leading to such landmark decisions as *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and *Miranda* v. *Arizona*, but also exacerbating tensions between the right and the left as the latter became "enamored of litigation as a driver of social change and came to hold the Supreme Court itself in near-religious reverence." Eventually, Waldman writes, "intense divisions within Congress spread to judicial nominations and came to be the central fact in how American courts were comprised." Among more recent rulings, Waldman highlights 2010's *Citizens United*, which "remade American politics" to give more influence to the wealthy, and *Shelby County* v. *Holder*, which significantly weakened the Voting Rights Act. He also delves into the links between the Federalist Society and the three conservative justices appointed by Donald Trump, and takes note of the historical precedents behind the 2022 *Dobbs* leak, which contributed to a "tense, accusatory, and suspicious" atmosphere within the court as it released other consequential and controversial rulings on gun rights and environmental regulations. Brisk yet detailed, this is a valuable overview of how America's highest court became such a lightning rod. *(June)*

We Hold Our Breath: A Journey to Texas Between Storms

Micah Fields. Norton, $27.95 (192p) ISBN 978-1-324-00379-3

Essayist Fields's evocative debut explores the development of his native Houston, Tex., against the backdrop of the many storms that have inundated America's fourth-largest city. When Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017, Fields's complicated feelings and "illogical love" for his hometown came rushing back as he set out from Iowa to rescue his mother. Noting that Houston was "gouged out from the sucking bowl of a swamp," Fields traces the city's evolution from a slavery-dependent agricultural economy to the hub of the U.S. oil and gas industry, highlighting how its lack of zoning and laissez-faire approach to regulations has led to its current environmental problems, including floods, chemical leaks, and air pollution. However, Houston's "anything goes" attitude about land use has also made it a welcoming and affordable mecca for "the nation's highest concentrations of immigrants from Vietnam, Pakistan and several other countries." Fields also profiles noteworthy locals including oil heiress Dominique de Menil, who built a public art sanctuary in the center of the city in the 1970s; self-taught abstract painter and fisherman Forrest Bess; and air monitor Juan Flores, who leads "toxic tours" through Houston's petrochemical corridor. It's a vibrant, multilayered portrait of a city full of contradictions. *(June)*



Five Times Faster: Rethinking the Science, Economics, and Diplomacy of Climate Change

Simon Sharpe. Cambridge Univ., $24.95 (350p) ISBN 978-1-00-932649-0

Economist Sharpe, a senior fellow at the World Resources Institute, debuts with an idealistic guide to fighting global warming. Asserting that radical changes in thinking need to be made within the climate movement, Sharpe calls for activists and policymakers to unite behind the goal of decarbonizing "the world economy five times faster than we currently are." Among other methods to shake up the "equilibrium" favored by current economic models, Sharpe contends that governments need to develop proper risk assessments that demonstrate the dangers of climate change to their citizens, that massive investments in renewable energy are needed, and that carbon taxes have done little to decrease global warming. He also claims that stringent regulations against fossil fuels will spur innovations in heating, transportation, and other sources of greenhouse gases. Though Sharpe's prose is crisp and urgent, he doesn't fully reckon with the political obstacles that stand in the way of such radical shifts in economic and public policy. Still, this is a stimulating and well-meaning call for change. *(June)*

Rich White Men: What It Takes to Uproot the Old Boys' Club and Transform America

Garrett Neiman. Legacy Lit, $30 (384p) ISBN 978-0-306-92556-6

Neiman, a senior fellow at Prosperity Now, debuts with a well-intentioned yet uneven look at the "compounding unearned advantages" that have allowed white men to accumulate most of the wealth and power in America, and what it would take to produce a more equitable society. Noting that social justice nonprofits and charitable organizations are heavily dependent on the generosity of rich white men like himself, Neiman contends that most philanthropists hold beliefs, including the idea that they "earned everything they have," that work against a just and equitable society. Nevertheless, he believes that many of his cohort can be convinced to abandon their prejudices and work to overcome injustice. He encourages these men to recognize their privilege, support governmental—not just nonprofit—antipoverty programs, embrace "stereotypically feminine leadership qualities," including humility and empathy, and work to bring about a culture of repair. The goal should be "to partner deeply across differences and ruffle feathers where we have influence," he writes. Though much of Neiman's argument is convincing, its scope is limited (his sources are mostly leadership books and people he knows), and his earnest self-criticism occasionally bleeds into virtue signaling. This call for change lacks force. *Agent: Mel Berger, WME. (June)*

Animal Spirits: The American Pursuit of Vitality from Camp Meeting to Wall Street

Jackson Lears. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $32 (464p) ISBN 978-0-374-29022-1

Historian Lears (*Rebirth of a Nation*) attempts to explain in this sprawling study "how animistic thinking survived in the modern Anglo-American world." Characterizing animal spirits as both "a loosely defined outlook acknowledging the centrality of spontaneous energy in human experience and a metaphysical worldview," Lears ranges from the emergence of credit-based capitalism in 18th-century England (he notes that Daniel Defoe thought "credit was to the body economic as animal spirits were to the individual body: a mysterious but essential vital force, an evanescent liquid evaporating into thin air"); to the outbreak of the Mexican-American War, where "enthusiasm for the sheer vitality—the animal spirits—unleashed by war won out over the fear of unreasoning animal instincts"; and the "varieties of black vitality" captured by the writers, musicians, and artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Lears draws captivating profiles of Americans who embodied "animistic thinking," including mesmeric healer Andrew Jackson Davis, Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy, and inventor Thomas Edison, and his extensive research touches on many fascinating historical eras. However, the concept of animal spirits remains amorphous (somehow, it's everything from "vernacular dance crazes to theoretical innovations in physics and psychology"), making it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about what it means to American history. The result is an entertaining but exhausting survey. *(June)*

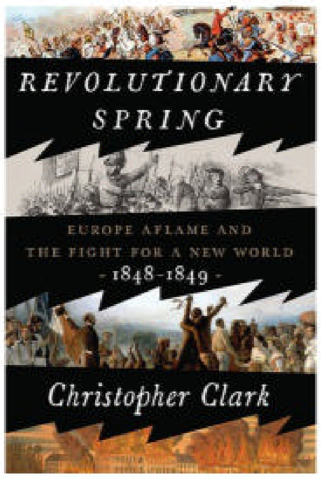
★ Cells: Memories for My Mother

Gavin McCrea. Scribe, $20 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-957363-34-9

In this exceptional memoir, McCrea (*Mrs. Engels*) unflinchingly untangles his

★ Revolutionary Spring: Europe Aflame and the Fight for a New World

Christopher Clark. Crown, $40 (880p) ISBN 978-0-525-57520-7



Bitter defeat bequeathed lasting victories in the pan-European revolutions of 1848, according to this sweeping history. Cambridge historian Clark (*Iron Kingdom*) untangles the chaotic political conflagrations that engulfed Europe, starting with a rebellion in Sicily; then moving to Paris, where an uprising forced French king Louis Philippe to abdicate to a revolutionary provisional government; then on to Vienna, Berlin, and other capitals where governments conceded constitutional reforms, an end to censorship, the emancipation of Jews, and other freedoms. These euphoric liberal triumphs gave way, he continues, to acrimonious divisions between middle-class revolutionary leaders and radicals who demanded guaranteed jobs, wages, and labor rights for workers—in Vienna even the choirboys went on strike—along with nationalist programs that threatened to unravel Europe's empires. The revolutions seemed to fail in 1849, when liberals and conservatives united to bloodily reimpose authoritarian, monarchical control, but Clark argues that they left behind a durable new regime of constitutional, parliamentary, reformist politics. Clark integrates the welter of local conflicts into a coherent grand narrative, grounding it in searching analyses of the era's economic and social tensions, political instabilities, and ideological fervors while also spotlighting the magnetic personalities (Karl Marx, Richard Wagner) and tragic romance of the upheaval. It's a magisterial recreation of an explosion that birthed the modern world. Illus. *Agent: Andrew Wylie, Wylie Agency. (June)*

family's history and its effects on his adult self. Returning to his native Dublin after years abroad, McCrea became his mother's caretaker as she succumbed to dementia during Covid lockdowns. From their shared apartment, he reflected on his years spent closeted and bullied in school, his family's legacy of mental illness, and his own HIV diagnosis, preparing at first to spin the material into a novel. Instead, he felt compelled to unpack his and his mother's once beautiful, now tenuous relationship. Dividing the text into "cells"—a nod to Louise Bourgeois's sculpture series—McCrea reconstructs rooms where he remembers key episodes from his life with sometimes-uncomfortable intimacy. He spares no one the microscope, including himself, writing with wide-open vulnerability about how his upbringing planted a scorching desire for acceptance that parlayed into bad relationships in adulthood. "I seek out and thrive in the sort of closeness in which the bathroom door is left open," he writes early on, as a sort of mission statement, hoping to renounce the passive attitudes he learned from his family, a "belief that expressing things gets you nowhere." He succeeds in spades, delivering a powerful and complicated reckoning with the ghosts of family dysfunction. This one isn't easy to shake. *(June)*

Kiss Me in the Coral Lounge: Intimate Confessions from a Happy Marriage

Helen Ellis. Doubleday, $26 (224p) ISBN 978-0-385-54820-5

Novelist Ellis (*Bring Your Baggage*) serves up irreverent essays about married life in all its less-than-glamorous glory. The author finds humor in the mundane, the semi-ridiculous (an extended email to a cat-sitter, full of painstaking detail for caring for an 16-year-old feline), and the sweet (on a not very successful attempt to cook moussaka, "the recipe equivalent of translating *War and Peace*," for her husband: "We are married now because he ate that then"). Elsewhere, she rhapsodizes about Viagra and comments on the ways married sex has defied her expectations ("If someone told me... that the best sex I'd ever have would be in my fifties with my fiftysomething-year-old husband, I'd never have believed them") and reminisces on her "last first kiss" with her husband, which the two recall differently ("This is how memory works in a happy marriage.... We are writing our own love story"). While one or two pieces feel incongruous, including a jokey, underbaked bit on housecleaning, Ellis's writing is on balance assured, charming, and laced with an understated humor that nearly always hits its mark—as when she describes her injured, Percocet-medicated mother at her sister's wedding, "mingling in broken English" with a man she thought she didn't know but who turned out to be her cousin. This delights. *(June)*

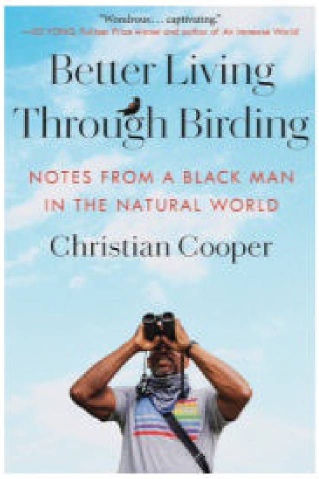
White House by the Sea: A Century of the Kennedys at Hyannis Port

Kate Storey. Scribner, $30 (432p) ISBN 978-1-982159-18-4

Journalist Storey debuts with an immersive behind-the-scenes history of the Kennedy family viewed through the lens of their summer home in Hyannis Port, Mass. Malcolm Cottage, built in 1904, became known as the Big House after Joseph Kennedy bought it in 1928 for $25,000. He doubled its footprint to accommodate his nine children, who started bringing their own families in the 1950s, when "it seemed every new year brought a new Kennedy." It was at the Big House that Rose and Joe Kennedy learned that their eldest son, Joe Jr., was killed in action during WWII; decades later, John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife, and her sister died in a plane crash off the coast of nearby Martha's Vineyard. Storey enriches her history in interviews with more than 120 sources—including Kennedy family friend Nancy Tenney, who was "like one of the children"—and sheds light on Joseph Kennedy's affair with actress Gloria Swanson, the bad behavior of Robert Kennedy Jr. and other members of the "Hyannis Port Terrors" in the 1970s, Ted Kennedy's final days spent battling a brain tumor at the Big House,

★ Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World

Christian Cooper. Random House, $28 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-24238-4


Better Living Through Birding
NOTES FROM A BLACK MAN IN THE NATURAL WORLD
Christian Cooper

Cooper, a Black birder who first gained media attention after sharing a video of him being falsely accused by a white woman of threatening her in Central Park in 2020, debuts with a lively, thoughtful memoir in which he defines himself by the hobby he was pursuing the afternoon he made headlines. Identifying himself as a "Black gay activist birder," Cooper recounts his longtime love for the winged creatures, nurtured during his Long Island childhood and college years at Harvard. With colorful and sometimes snarky commentary ("southern screamer" birds are "not to be confused with a vocal Alabamian in the throes of excitement"), Cooper reflects on how his hobby provided skills, including sensory sharpness he's since deployed at protests and other potentially hostile confrontations, that have helped him navigate the world as a gay Black man. In addressing the Central Park incident, he elegantly frames it within both his own bird-focused narrative and a broader conversation about racism and police brutality: "I have lived my whole life as a Black man in the United States. I don't have to go all the way back to Tulsa and Rosewood and Emmett Till to know what it means for a white woman to accuse a Black man, and who would likely be believed." These more sweeping arguments are never made with a cudgel; instead, they organically emerge from his captivating personal story. Meanwhile, his passion for birding could make hobbyists of even the most avian-agnostic. This rewarding memoir adds heft and heart to the headlines. *Agent: Gail Ross, Ross Yoon Agency. (June)*

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and more. Full of vivid profiles and intriguing asides about the history of Cape Cod, this is a compassionate portrait of America's most famous political dynasty. *Agent: Susan Canavan, Waxman Literary. (June)*

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First Family: George Washington's Heirs and the Making of America

Cassandra A. Good. Hanover Square, $32.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-335-44951-1

George and Martha Washington's grandchildren were "proud but profoundly flawed people," according to this immersive family biography by historian Good (*Founding Friendships*). Martha's wealthy first husband, Daniel Parke Custis, died in 1757, two years before she married George, who became step-grandfather to her son Jacky's children, Elizabeth (Eliza), Martha (Patty), Eleanor (Nelly), and Wash. After Jacky's sudden death in 1781, George and Martha adopted and raised Nelly and Wash, who "enter[ed] their young adulthood just as the country was experiencing an awkward stage in its own growth." Good tracks the Custis girls through their courtships and marriages and details George's "stern advice and guidance" to Wash, who had "an almost unconquerable disposition to indolence in every thing that did not tend to his amusements," according to his grandfather. Light is also shed on how slavery helped the Custises build their wealth, and on Wash's support—influenced by "a growing race science that codified supposed African American racial inferiority"—for the American Colonization Society, which sought to relocate free Blacks to Africa. Throughout, Good's meticulous research and fluid prose buttress her case that the Custises were emblematic of "America's story in its first century: military triumph and tragedy; democracy and old aristocratic ties; visions of liberty coexisting alongside the horrors of slavery." It's a fascinating perspective on the nation's growing pains. *(June)*

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War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine

Norman Solomon. New Press, $26.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-62097-791-0

Journalist Solomon (*Made Love, Got War*) offers a sharp critique of Republicans and Democrats who advocate for military action, U.S. media coverage that makes it easier to sell wars to the public, and the often-hidden cost of civilian casualties from errant U.S. attacks. He claims that when Russia targeted Ukrainian cities during the recent invasion, the U.S. media was "all-hands-on-deck with empathetic, poignant reporting.... But, when American missiles and bombs hit population centers over the previous two decades, the human tragedies rarely got anything more than short shrift." (He also notes that the architect of the U.S. military's "shock and awe" strategy in the 2003 Iraq has "judged the Russia effort to be of inferior quality, with mild impact compared to what he had pushed the Pentagon to inflict on Baghdad.") Elsewhere, Solomon critiques the Biden administration for providing weapons and logistical support to Saudi Arabia while the country wages war in Yemen, notes that the Pentagon's annual funding for special operations has increased by $10 billion since 2001, and calls out the "U.S. media establishment" for giving "full-throated support" to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, only to offer a much harsher judgment 20 years later. Though Solomon paints U.S. journalism and foreign policy in broad strokes, he builds a convincing case that too many secrets are being kept from the public. This is a troubling and worthwhile call for change. *(June)*

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The Italian Squad: The True Story of the Immigrant Cops Who Fought the Rise of the Mafia

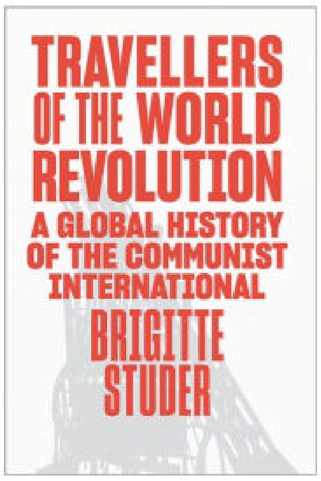
Paul Moses. New York Univ., $29.95 (304p) ISBN 978-1-479814-19-0

Journalism professor Moses (*An Unlikely Union*) provides the definitive account of a fascinating chapter in New York City's law enforcement history with this look at the early 20th-century activities of a special NYPD unit comprising Italian Americans who were charged with stunting the growth of the Mafia. In 1904, Giuseppe Petrosino became the first commander of the Italian Squad, and achieved renown combatting a group of extortionists known as the Black Hand. In 1909, Petrosino travelled to Sicily on a secret mission, but was gunned down in the street. From there, Moses focuses on the victories and vicissitudes of Petrosino's successors, including Anthony Vachris, who completed Petrosino's deadly mission in Sicily, and Michael Fiaschetti, who headed the unit until it was disbanded in 1922. Utilizing extensive primary documents, Moses recounts numerous crimes the unit thwarted and details their impact on the public image of Italian Americans without sliding into hero worship. He's careful to separate fact from fiction, emphasizing that the Black Hand was not "a massive criminal conspiracy rooted in the Old World" but "more of a brand name adopted by disconnected bands of thugs." That dogged pursuit of truth over salaciousness lends the volume authority, which Moses supplements with brisk pacing. New York history nuts will be in heaven. *(June)*

Travellers of the World Revolution: A Global History of the Communist International

Brigitte Studer, trans. from the German by Dafydd Rees Roberts. Verso, $39.95 (496p) ISBN 978-1-83976-801-9

In this comprehensive survey, historian Studer (*The Transnational World of the Cominternians*) details "the working lives and everyday circumstances" of the "professional revolutionaries" employed by the Communist International, or Comintern, the Kremlin-funded global network of Communist parties and "front organizations" that sought to "bring about the revolutionary transformation of social and political relations" between 1919 and 1943. Drawing on archival material, Studer sheds light on the Comintern's inner workings, including its operations in Berlin before the 1933 Nazi takeover, which were funded by the sale of diamonds smuggled out of Russia in the soles of couriers' shoes, and its failed efforts to overthrow the British government in India in the early 1920s. Studer also captures the chaos of the Comintern's annual meetings in the Kremlin, contrasting organizers' passionate debates about "the political future of humanity" with the "sense of boredom that gradually began to pervade the daily work" of Comintern officials. Describing the Comintern's covert activities in China, Africa, and South America, Studer slashes away at half a century of stodgy, Eurocentric research to portray the Comintern as a highly organized bureaucracy and "a pioneer of a global, anti-colonial, anti-racist and anti-imperialist politics." Expansive and impeccably researched, this is a valuable addition to scholarship on early 20th-century communism. *(June)*


TRAVELLERS OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION
A GLOBAL HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL
BRIGITTE STUDER

Muscle: The Gripping Story of Strength and Movement

Roy A. Meals. Norton, $28.95 (288p) ISBN 978-1-324-02144-5

Meals (*Bones*), a professor of orthopedic surgery at UCLA, delivers a thorough overview of muscles and how they operate. Expounding on their biology, Meals explains that, on a molecular level, muscle consists of two protein filaments, actin and myosin, that work in tandem to convert "chemical energy into physical force." He surveys different kinds of muscles, noting that skeletal muscles (those attached to bones) make up 40% of human body mass, smooth muscles in the trachea and intestines are responsible for moving air and solids through the body, and cardiac muscle in the heart contracts to keep blood circulating. He writes that while skeletal muscle is mostly under voluntary control, smooth muscle operates outside of consciousness and serves a crucial role in the autonomic nervous system, which is responsible for activating the fight-or-flight response (dilating pupils and lung airways to see farther and "capture more oxygen" when threatened), as well as promoting digestion and lowering one's heart rate when resting. The scientific insights illuminate the abilities and oddities of the human body (goosebumps are caused by the contraction of small muscles connecting hair follicles to the skin), and the fitness advice is a boon (aerobic exercise for at least 150 minutes per week "improves the heart's muscle tone"). The result is a strong primer on an essential part of the human body. Illus. *(June)*

★ Wasteland: The Secret World of Waste and the Urgent Search for a Cleaner Future

Oliver Franklin-Wallis. Hachette, $30 (400p) ISBN 978-0-306-82711-2

Franklin-Wallis, an editor at *GQ*, debuts with an alarming exposé of how waste is handled around the world. Outlining the inequitable ways in which the world disposes of trash and sharing the stories of those affected, the author recounts his time climbing mountains of refuse with "waste pickers," who make a living gathering recyclables from a Delhi landfill, and describes the work of an environmental scientist who oversees the site of a former Oklahoma town abandoned after toxic byproducts from nearby mines made it uninhabitable. Franklin-Wallis pays keen attention to how waste disposal intersects with social justice, as when he discusses how legal loopholes incentivize rich countries to export their recyclables to the global south, where they end up leaching chemicals from landfills, a practice known as "toxic colonialism." A fierce critic of greenwashing, the author suggests that "compostable plastics" are mostly bunk and describes how some grocery stores incinerate the recyclables they collect from customers. Franklin-Wallis achieves the difficult feat of making an ostensibly mundane topic feel urgent, and the compassionate profiles effectively humanize a problem that's massive in scope. Additionally, his proposed solutions are well considered, including suggestions to "make greenwashing illegal" and hold companies responsible for the waste they produce, no matter where it ends up. It's a vital call to action. *(July)*

To Dye For: How Toxic Fashion Is Making Us Sick—and How We Can Fight Back

Alden Wicker. Putnam, $29 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-42261-8

Journalist Wicker urges consumers to

[Q&A]

PW Talks with Alden Wicker

Chemical Clothing

Journalist Wicker exposes the fashion industry's use of toxic chemicals in *To Dye For* (Putnam, June; reviewed on p. 53).

You write that beauty companies have started to move toward making "cleaner" products, while the same isn't true for fashion companies. Why is that?

The huge difference is that clothes don't come with an ingredients list. So even if you know you're allergic to something, like a certain dye, you wouldn't know what it's in. I think most people aren't even aware there are chemicals in their clothes. They look at a white T-shirt and they think it's just cotton—it says 100% cotton on the label. But in fact fashion involves extremely complex chemistry, and I think there are even very few professionals who understand the full danger of what's on our clothing.

© JUSTIN N. LANE

What segments of society does this issue tend to affect?

This has always been a garment worker problem, but it's also a women's problem. The chemicals in clothing, like certain dyes, are closely linked to autoimmune disease, which affects women more often than men, and fertility problems, also seen as a women's issue. I think there's a lot of sexism wrapped up in telling women that their health problems are all in their heads, and this falls into that category. Also, it's often mothers who have to be detectives and figure out why their children have allergies or skin problems caused by clothes. And fashion is generally seem as a dumb women's thing. On the other side of it, most of the people in the textile industry with the power to effect change are men.

Can you talk about why the medical system isn't set up to recognize these chemical intolerances?

It's an extremely complex issue. You can have a skin reaction from something that touched you several days ago, and it might last for over a week. Since most people wear something different every day, they may not be able to trace the reaction back to a piece of clothing—if they even think about it as a possibility. But when multiple airlines issued new uniforms that caused health problems, a number of flight attendants were able to figure out the culprit.

Did your ideas for the book evolve as you worked on it?

As I researched, the book grew to be about more than just fashion. Fashion is my way in and I hope it is for readers, too. But this is about the under-regulation of chemicals, which are also in our home products and packaging and can cause complex health issues. So the book is not only for people who care about fashion or sustainability, it's for anyone who's struggling with mysterious chronic health problems. I think anybody will find something here to help them better manage their health.

—Miriam Grossman

think twice before picking up a piece of fast fashion in her incisive debut. Following up on the idea that "fashion products have some of the most complicated and multilayered chemical profiles of any product you or I can buy—without a license, anyway," Wicker spotlights a host of people who've been affected by the fashion industry's unregulated toxic chemical use, among them flight attendants who wore uniforms that caused bloody skin lesions; an industrial hygienist later discovered the clothing contained Teflon and tributyl phosphate, which trigger skin and respiratory issues. Meanwhile, a fashion production manager describes grim factory visits in China, where she found workers living on-site and using toxic dyes without protection. Wicker enriches her study with fascinating background on how arsenic ended up in makeup and mercury in top hats before manufacturers switched to azo dyes, which are poorly understood and suspected to have carcinogenic effects. While the situation might seem dire, the author suggests consumers can protect themselves by buying used clothing and avoiding dry cleaners, which often use toxic cleaning agents. Wicker makes a robust, sobering case that "much of what historically made fashion dangerous to our health has been invisible," grounded by copious research and frequently shocking first-person accounts. This is a real eye-opener. *(June)*

* * *

Lessons from an American Stoic: How Emerson Can Change Your Life

Mark Matousek. HarperOne, $28.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-06305-969-6

In this contemplative essay collection, memoirist Matousek (*When You're Falling, Dive*) draws life lessons from the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), "the eloquent voice of America's conscience." Specifically, Matousek focuses on Emerson's thinking on self-reliance, and how it can "dispel the illusion of our powerlessness" in a society that can feel fragile or dangerous. The author encourages readers to "cultivate the art of being alone" to develop self-knowledge ("With practice, solitude becomes the 'place where we are least alone'"), forge resilience that's inextricable from vulnerability (or, as Emerson wrote, "Our strength grows out of our weakness"), and adopt a practice of journaling (Emerson's journal was his "closest companion" beginning at age 14). Emerson's worldview is cogently conveyed, and readers will find comfort in his principles' staying power and the knowledge that what Matousek dubs America's current "torn-in-half feeling of tenuous survival" is anything but new. Those looking for commonsense guidance to a more self-directed life will find it here. *(June)*

Ultra-processed People: The Science Behind the Food That Isn't Food

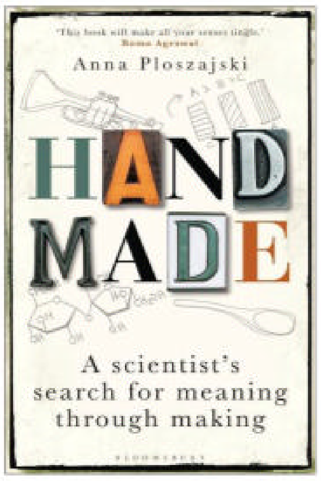
Chris van Tulleken. Norton, $30 (336p) ISBN 978-1-324-03672-2

In this scathing takedown, van Tulleken (*Secrets of the Human Body*), a doctor of infectious diseases, studies how ultra-processed foods harm the body and how the corporations that make them put profits above consumer health. He suggests that "UPFs"—which can be identified by their use of such heavily modified ingredients as "stabilisers, emulsifiers, gums, lecithin, [and] glucose"—contribute to heart attacks, high blood pressure, and weight gain because they short circuit the body's system for regulating consumption. Because UPFs tend to be soft and "essentially pre-chewed," they're digested so quickly they don't "reach the parts of the gut that send the 'stop eating' signal to the brain." Van Tulleken catalogues the misdeeds of the corporations that make UPFs, telling how Nestlé's aggressive door-to-door marketing of their products in rural Brazil played a part in the skyrocketing rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes there, and detailing Coca-Cola's covert financing of dubious scientific studies that refute the link between soda and obesity. The science puts into easily understandable language the toll that junk food takes on the body, and van Tulleken's interviews with industry insiders illuminate ("It's all about price and costs. Those [synthetic] ingredients save money," says a biochemist who worked for the British food company Unilever). This impassioned polemic will make readers think twice about what they eat. *(June)*

Handmade: A Scientist's Search for Meaning Through Making

Anna Ploszajski. Bloomsbury Sigma, $18 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-4729-7108-1

Scientist Ploszajski leaves the laboratory for the atelier in her charming debut about the science of common materials. With wide-eyed wonder and a sense of humor, she examines the techniques behind the making of brass, paper, plastic, pottery, steel, and sugar, among other goods, and shares her attempts to produce them herself. Though she's clumsy at a potter's wheel and fumbled molten silica while blowing glass, she successfully delves into the chemistry and physics involved, explaining that clay comes from magma that reacted with granite and carbon dioxide underground, and that the "amorphous" molecular structure of glass makes it malleable when heated. Her examination of the substances' uses brings her to unexpected places, including Bonneville Salt Flats International Speedway in Utah, where her expertise on the molecular structure of steel helped a team competing for a land speed record build a more durable car, as well as to the English Channel, where she relied on sugary treats to give her the energy to swim across it. Ploszajski is a talented science communicator, using analogies to illuminate the molecular world ("Atoms that vibrate more energetically take up more space, like impassioned movers and shakers on the dance floor"), and the zany accounts of her fieldwork are lots of fun. This pop science adventure rocks. *(June)*



Will to Wild: Adventures Great and Small to Change Your Life

Shelby Stanger. Simon & Schuster, $27.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-98219-430-7

In this upbeat debut, journalist Stanger calls on readers to pursue a life of adventure, whether that means scaling Mount Everest or visiting a national park. Drawing on others' odysseys and her own experience ditching a career in marketing to become an adventure journalist, Stanger explains how to pursue "wild ideas," or ones that "scare you," involve nature, and "change your life in a positive way." Readers should start by determining whether they're stuck, she writes, be it in a job or relationship. Next, she explains how to seek "trail signs" to get started, as when an amateur runner read about a man who trekked across America, and became "so excited he thought he might throw up." (He eventually pulled off the same feat, running from San Francisco to New York in "forty-two days, six hours, and thirty minutes.") Stanger discusses mapping one's proverbial trail, tackling fear, and reaching the "finish line," after which adventurers may feel fatigue or even grief. Drawing on anecdotes from thrill seekers who skied to the South Pole and summited Kilimanjaro, Stanger weaves a buoyant mix of inspiration, personal experience, and nuts and bolts tips (she recommends, for instance, taking a wilderness first aid class before embarking on a backcountry adventure). Those looking to break in their hiking boots will want to pick this up. *(June)*

Smart Sex: How to Boost Your Sex IQ and Own Your Pleasure

Emily Morse. Park Row, $32 (352p) ISBN 978-0-778-38710-7

Morse (coauthor of *Hot Sex*), host of the *Sex with Emily* podcast, urges readers to reexamine preconceived notions of pleasure in her savvy debut. First, she walks readers through assessing their Sex IQ, a way of "comprehending where you are sexually at any given time" that's determined by five pillars: embodiment, health, collaboration, self-knowledge, and self-acceptance. Moving on to partnered sex, Morse argues that "communication is lubrication" and explains how to best have candid conversations about sex (spoiler: never while in bed together). She also details orgasms and stresses they need not be the ultimate goal; instead, pleasure and sexual exploration should be the aim. Morse's prose reads like a conversation with an older sister (if she had a doctorate in human sexuality)—her style is fun, informative, and straightforward. This serves as an excellent resource on sexual pleasure for singletons and couples alike, and even the most sexually knowledgeable may find a helpful tip or two. *(June)*

Tough Titties: On Living Your Best Life When You're the F-ing Worst

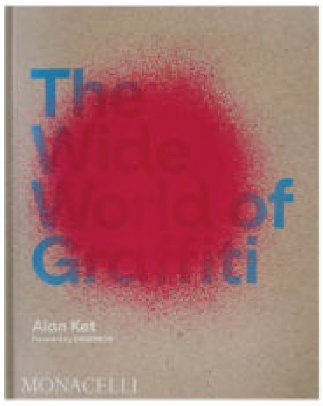
Laura Belgray. Hachette, $28 (320p) ISBN 978-0-30-682604-7

Belgray mines her past for life lessons in her humorous if disorganized debut. Bouncing around her life at random, Belgrade writes of failed efforts to fit in at her old-money high school by trying too hard ("Don't be a climber," she advises), her strained relationship with food throughout childhood and adulthood, and meeting her husband "during a phase of rock-bottom self-esteem" while he had a girlfriend and she was "clinging to a desperate relationship with a cheating sadsack." She also charts her professional path from a post-college bartending gig to spots writing promo copy for VH1 and Nickelodeon to owning her own copywriting agency. The narrative is interwoven with sometimes-awkward quips, including one about how two failed breast reductions serve as a reminder to "grow everyday... don't let anyone keep you small." In that vein, the advice portion of the book definitely takes a backseat to her humorous retellings, and some chapters end without any real reflection at all. Those seeking actionable wisdom should look elsewhere, but this will resonate with misfits looking for a laugh and some understanding. *(June)*

★ The Wide World of Graffiti

Alan Ket. Monacelli, $60 (384p) ISBN 978-1-5809-3601-9

Ket (*Graffiti Tattoo*), cofounder of the Museum of Graffiti, in Miami, delivers a knockout in this all-encompassing survey of graffiti culture. The art form has a history that stretches back thousands of years—including lewd jokes found in ancient Pompeii and names that were scrawled in the catacombs in Paris—and has been controversial almost as long, he writes, leading to "hundreds of millions of dollars spent on graffiti eradication" and antivandalism campaigns driven by politicians who framed the practice as a "sign of a crumbling society." Ket's work, though, is primarily a celebration, and he emphasizes how graffiti historically served as a vital creative outlet for people with few resources, and helped democratize notions of art by offering it to "the public and not just wealthy museum patrons." Ket also has enlightening conversations with such influential graffiti artists as SaneSmith, brothers who were sued for $3 million for tagging the Brooklyn Bridge in 1988 (though charges were eventually dropped); Zurik, a Colombian artist who paints graffiti words made of geometric shapes; and Nani Chacon, a Diné and Chicana artist known for her large-scale murals. Through detailed essays, in depth interviews, and stunning photographs, Ket's account makes palpable the vibrant, dynamic culture of an underappreciated art form. This impresses. Photos. *(June)*



You've Got This: Seven Steps to a Life You Love

Michaela Dunbar. Harper Wave, $18.99 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-0-06-330956-2

Dunbar, a clinical psychologist and founder of the @myeasytherapy Instagram account, aims in her empowering if uneven debut to help readers become people "who can have any thought, and any feeling, and still do what the f*** [they] need to do." Each chapter tackles an emotional or mental issue readers can more effectively manage, such as anxiety, for which the author includes a basic overview of the body's response to threats and outlines such coping strategies as journaling. Also discussed is overthinking, which the author likens to "having an anxious parent in your head trying to keep you safe" and can be managed through techniques including "time-boxing" thoughts (limiting overthinking to a scheduled block of time). She also examines imposter syndrome and fear of failure ("Ask yourself what's the worst that could happen if you just went for it?"). Despite some smart takeaways, Dunbar's sometimes overly conversational tone and occasional tendency to skim over sources create less convincing moments ("Truth: The mind/body connection is real. Believe the hype"). Fans looking for an extension to Dunbar's Instagram page will be pleased, but those seeking general mental health advice may want to start elsewhere. *(June)*

Georgia O'Keeffe: To See Takes Time

Edited by Samantha Friedman. Museum of Modern Art, $50 (200p) ISBN 978-1-633-45147-6

In this enlightening entry, Friedman (*What Degas Saw*), associate curator at the Museum of Modern Art, traces how Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) developed a visual language over the course of her career. Since her earliest days as an art teacher, O'Keeffe drew and painted compulsively—and nearly obsessively—and was inspired by mentor Arthur Wesley Dow to repeat figures until she discovered their perfect composition, scale, and color. In 1915, after O'Keeffe resolved to "start anew, to strip away what I had been taught," she stopped emulating other artists' styles and forged her own ideas and motifs, focusing on landscapes, waves, and nudes. Friedman spotlights the watercolors O'Keeffe produced after moving to Texas in 1916, as she explored the possibilities of color in landscape paintings and nude self-portraits; oil depictions of flowers that used "directional strokes that conform to the shape of the subject" after the painter's 1918 move to New York; and from later in life, aerial views of landscapes that were characterized by a curious mix of abstraction and representation, indicating that "with enough distance, even reality can become unbelievable." Combining careful analysis, quotes from O'Keeffe, and lush renderings, Friedman arrives at an engrossing and visually arresting synthesis of the artist's stylistic evolution. Art connoisseurs will treasure this. Photos. *(Apr.)*

Lifestyle

Food & Cooking

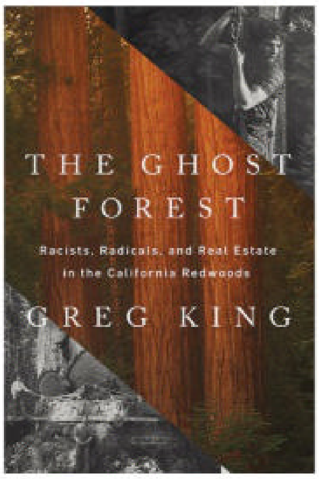
★ A Splash of Soy: Everyday Food from Asia

Lara Lee. Bloomsbury, $35 (256p) ISBN 978-1-63973-043-8

"Subtlety is not within my sphere of qualities," declares Lee (*Coconut & Samba*) in this bold, zippy guide to cooking Asian classics with speed and confidence.

★ The Ghost Forest: Racists, Radicals, and Real Estate in the California Redwoods

Greg King. PublicAffairs, $32 (480p) ISBN 978-1-5417-6867-3


THE GHOST FOREST
Racists, Radicals, and Real Estate in the California Redwoods
GREG KING

The lumber industry, abetted by the government, reaped massive profits while ravaging California's redwood forests, according to journalist King's damning debut. King describes how the large-scale clearing of redwoods began after 1878, when lumber companies abused a federal law meant to transfer publicly owned land to homesteaders and seized millions of acres of forest at prices far below market rate. Decrying government officials who have enabled the forests' destruction, King criticizes the California Department of Forestry's pro-business slant (since its establishment in 1973, it has argued on numerous occasions that clearing land is somehow good for wildlife) and the Board of Forestry's toothless statutes that create the illusion of environmental protections while permitting deforestation to continue. The author focuses much of his ire on the Save the Redwoods League, formed in 1918 by prominent eugenicists as an ostensible conservation group that instead covertly worked to further industry interests, constituting "the nation's first and most successful example of... 'greenwashing.'" King's dogged research turns up the closed-door deals and nefarious legal schemes that led to the destruction of 96% of redwood forests, providing a disturbing chronicle of how lumber companies flouted laws and came out on top. The result is a sobering accounting of the forces environmentalists are up against. *(June)*

Indonesian and Thai cuisine are especially well represented, but the collection is pan-Asian, with savory Japanese pancakes, customizable Korean bibimbap, and a Philippine adobo presented alongside hybrid adaptations including steak with Asian chimichurri and sambal patatas bravas. Lee has a way with words, from chapter titles ("Sticky, Grilled & Glazed," "Pickle-Me, Fill-Me, Sauce-Me") to mouthwatering recipe intros: peanut sauce is "a nutty, spicy and sweet-and-salty pool of joy," and lemongrass charred brussels sprouts offer "the moreish flavor of a really delicious bag of potato chips you can't stop eating." Her casual approach encourages simple substitutes (lasagna strips for biang-biang noodles, for example) and playful experimentation; a riff on Vietnamese banh mi urges readers to "finish off... with as many condiments as you can dream up." Speedy dishes abound, from 15-minute tom yum soup to an "almost-instant" chicken curry, and a final chapter—titled "The Asian(ish) Kitchen"—provides a useful shopping and cooking guide to soy sauces, chilies, and other essentials. The result is a fun and practical companion for home cooks looking to expand their Asian repertoire. *Agent: Nicola Chang, David Higham Assoc. (June)*

Vegetable Revelations: Inspiration for Produce-Forward Cooking

Steven Satterfield. Harper Wave, $40 (336p) ISBN 978-0-06-308803-0

Chef Satterfield admits that the premise of his latest ("Take a vegetable, and decide how to prepare it right now to show off its best attributes") is the same as that of his 2015 debut, *Root to Leaf,* but he asserts that his style has evolved since then, a claim that rings true throughout this impressive collection. The first half is devoted to the "building blocks" of flavor, including stocks, condiments, spice blends, relishes, butters, and toppings. Satterfield is known for his whole-plant recipes, and he lives up to expectations, offering grilled carrots with a carrot-top chermoula, and golden beets with sizzling beet tops. He proves vegetables are good for slurping, too; celery stalks and seeds infuse a syrup for sparkling soda, while asparagus ends and kale stems are simmered for soup. Leafy greens are wilted and layered into grilled cheese sandwiches; pureed into the batter for a stunning, savory rendition of French toast; and turned into verdant pappardelle. Elevated yet doable recipes such as Romanesco cauliflower with frilly pasta in a white bolognese and a portobello French dip with mushroom au jus underscore the author's winning philosophy. This is plant-forward cooking with universal appeal. *Agent: Amy Hughes, Dunow, Carlson & Lerner Literary. (Apr.)*

Pasta for All Seasons: Dishes That Celebrate the Flavors of Italy and the Bounty of the Pacific Northwest

Michela Tartaglia. Sasquatch, $22.95 (176p) ISBN 978-1-63217-427-7

Readers shouldn't expect traditional nonna recipes from Seattle chef Tartaglia (*Pasta Casalinga*); instead, the author proffers modern takes that incorporate local ingredients from her adoptive home in the Pacific Northwest. While not traditional, the dishes, organized by season, have a recognizably casual Italian style. Summer features sockeye salmon and heirloom tomatoes from Seattle's Billy's Garden. Winter brings a ragù made with elk and a spicy puttanesca with geoduck. A fifth chapter offers two recipes suitable for any time of year: pasta in a simple tomato sauce and a tomato-less mushroom lasagna. Several options rely on ingredients from Seattle's Pike Place market, including a pasta with spinach and almonds that folds in Beecher's Flagship cheese and African cayenne from World Spice Merchants. There are two pasta dough recipes, but the focus here is on vegetable-heavy toppings, like a bracing pesto of stinging nettles and walnuts or a yellow pepper puree. The area's morel mushrooms come into play, as does grass-raised lamb from the San Juan Islands. This specificity is what makes this outing special, but it may limit its application; home cooks in other parts of the country will have to go heavy on substitutions. This welcoming guide has character to spare, if a limited reach. *(Apr.)*

Y'All Eat Yet?: Welcome to the Pretty B*tchin' Kitchen

Miranda Lambert. Dey Street, $35 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-06-308778-1

Country music superstar Lambert takes fans into the kitchen in her down-home debut recipe collection. Lambert admits she "love(s) eating way more than cooking," and it shows as she pulls recipes from her mother and grandmother, friends, and fellow singer Trisha Yearwood, and looks to her father for guidance on seasoning a cast iron skillet. Most dishes are simple and probably not all that different from what many home cooks already make, among them chicken salad and "old timer's green bean casserole." But recipes aren't really the point here. Instead, Lambert uses stories of food to celebrate friendship, good times, and the importance of kinship. The dishes themselves may be secondary, but those looking for tasty variations on deviled eggs or clever Ziploc omelets for camping need look no further. Gumbo, pumpkin spice coffee creamer, and "Bev's Famous Meatloaf" are just some of the country goodness offered up. Desserts are a Lambert favorite, and in this area she does not disappoint: rum balls, whiskey cupcakes, and peanut butter pie are sure to keep folks at the dinner table. Whether served around the campfire or for a holiday meal, these dishes charm in their tasty simplicity. *(Apr.)*

Ikoyi: A Journey Through Bold Heat with Recipes

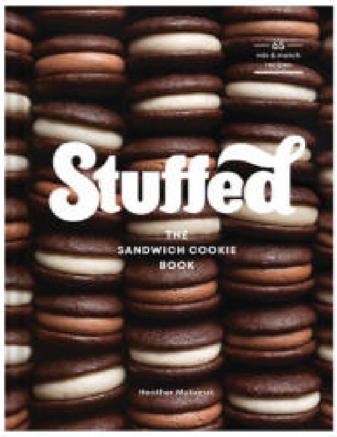
Jeremy Chan. Phaidon, $64.95 (256p)
ISBN 978-1-83866-630-9

Through these creative if out of reach recipes, chef Chan offers a behind-the-scenes look at his two Michelin star London restaurant, Ikoyi. The book opens with Chan's origin story: dissatisfied working in finance, Chan and his best friend, Iré Hassan-Odukale, started a catering business. A year later, they found a space for a restaurant and named it after the neighborhood in Lagos, Nigeria, where Hassan-Odukale was born, because it "felt instinctively warm and unpretentious." The recipes, pulled straight from Ikoyi's kitchens and inspired by spicy West African flavors, can make no such claim. Ambitious cooks will be intrigued by Chan's unique creations, like smoked jollof rice with crab custard, and blue poppy seed waffles with smoked honey butter and daikon ganache, but even the author admits sourcing ingredients will be "difficult or at times impossible." In conjunction with each recipe, Chan shares the story behind its inception, and his prose occasionally chafes ("my aim is to express the very essence of the animal or vegetable, rendering it even more itself than it was before it landed on the plate"). Complete with gorgeous photos, this reads more like an advertisement for Ikoyi than anything readers would try to make at home. Still, adventurous foodies will find plenty to enjoy. *(Apr.)*

★ Stuffed: The Sandwich Cookie Book

Heather Mubarak. Chronicle, $29.95 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-79721-453-5

Sixty-five irresistible renditions of the sandwich cookie come together in *Browned Butter Blondie* blogger Mubarak's sublime debut, which is as attractive to the eye as to the palate thanks to its mouthwatering photos. Employing 13 simple kitchen tools (including a cookie scoop and a kitchen scale) and 10 "pantry must-haves," Mubarak elevates the sandwich cookie landscape with delightful mix-and-match flexibility. In addition to the cookie recipes, 33 filling options—guava, chai, and eggnog buttercream among them—produce a spectrum of innovative combos. Chocolate lovers will drool over recipes for hot fudge sundae macarons and nutella ganache–filled chocolate truffle cookies. For a savory cocktail go-along, try rosemary pine nut sables stuffed with whipped goat cheese. Copycat versions of childhood favorites include imitation Nutter Butters, gourmet Golden Oreos, and homemade Milanos. Other sections focus on spicy "Cookies with a Kick," citrusy "Tart and Tangy" options, and chilled ice cream–filled cookies (including the boozy Bourbon ice cream-filled molasses cookies). Tempting close-ups pique the imagination and stimulate the senses. The result is sure to fulfill every cookie craving. *Agent: Andrianna Yeatts, ICM Partners. (Apr.)*



Hobbies & Crafts

Make Your Own Mosaics: Ancient Techniques to Contemporary Art

Helen Miles. White Owl, $22.95 trade paper
(120p) ISBN 978-1-399-00635-4

Mosaic artist Miles debuts with a thorough exploration of mosaics and how to create them. Blending art history with practical instruction, Miles expounds on technique and chronicles the history of the craft from ancient Mesopotamia to the present, describing how ancient Romans depicted gods in tessellated stone and marble and how Christians in the early 400s installed mosaics in houses of worship to inspire awe. The author outlines design principles, noting that mosaics "achieve visual clarity" by juxtaposing contrasting colors and that the spaces in between pieces should be relatively uniform. Included among the projects are a stepping stone featuring orange and blue triangles, a scene depicting a green pear tree, and a piece made by pressing shells, sea glass, and other items found at the beach into paste. Miles writes for novices, detailing everything beginners need to know about tools (a utility knife and angled tweezers are "essential"), protective gear (safety glasses protect the eyes from stray shards while cutting tile), and applying grout (press it into the spaces between tiles and then gently scrub the mosaic's surface clean with a damp sponge). The historical material highlights the rich tradition of the art form, and Miles's comprehensive guidance ensures readers have all they need to get started. Crafters will want to check this out. *(June)*

Crochet Baby Blankets: 13 Easy to Intermediate Designs

Kristi Simpson. Stackpole, $11.95 trade paper
(32p) ISBN 978-0-8117-7273-0

This no-frills outing by crocheter Simpson (*Supersize Crochet Animals*) shows how to crochet blankets that any infant will want to cuddle with. Eschewing instructions on how to crochet or make different stitches, Simpson gets straight to the blankets. There's the "cocoa stripes" piece made up of beige and brown shell stitch strips, "Evelyn dreams" with its taupe mesh bookended by white and orange stripes, and "happy time," a turquoise item that mostly sticks to double crochet stitches, making it the simplest of the set. The intermediate designs include a "roly-poly play mat" with concentric circles featuring designs inspired by stained glass windows, and the blue, green, yellow, and pink "cutie-pie stitch sampler blanket" that uses a different kind of stitch every other row. Simpson does a solid job balancing style with simplicity, though the lack of guidance on crocheting basics means beginners won't want to make this the first crochet manual they pick up. Additionally, those who prefer to work off a chart will be disappointed by the exclusive use of written instructions. Crocheters who have mastered the basics will get the most out of this. *(May)*

Polymer Clay Jewelry: The Ultimate Guide to Making Wearable Art Earrings

Rachael Skidmore. Walter Foster, $22.99 trade paper (128p) ISBN 978-0-7603-8273-8

Clay artist Skidmore debuts with a colorful manual for creating polymer clay earrings. Providing a detailed overview of how to get started, she describes the tools and materials needed, noting that tissue blades are ideal for slicing and chopping, and recommending titanium earring backs because they're "sturdy, affordable, and hypoallergenic." Helpful tips offer guidance on choosing a color scheme (picking shades next to each other on the color wheel creates "visual harmony"), preparing clay for molding (she recommends feeding it through a pasta machine), and finishing an item (placing a disposable aluminum dish over a project ensures the pieces bake evenly in the oven). The vibrant projects have a throwback feel, as seen in the rectangular green and white checkered-print earrings and the "retro circles" that use brown, gray, and white clay to create a stylized pattern that resembles bubbles. Skidmore makes use of a variety of techniques, including making divots in gold-colored clay to mimic hammered brass and using black liquid clay to put speckles on yellow crescent pieces, creating the appearance of ripe bananas. The projects are lots of fun, and the plentiful photos illustrate how to execute each step. This is a must for amateur jewelers. *(May)*

Home & Garden

Kaleidoscope: Modern Homes in Every Colour

Amy Moorea Wong. Hardie Grant, $50 (256p) ISBN 978-1-78488-546-5

Journalist Wong encourages readers to embrace color in their homes in her dazzling debut. Photos of 18 houses accompany interviews with the designers who decorated them in which they expound on their approaches to using color. For example, Stine Goya, founder of a Copenhagen fashion label, combines lilac walls, light blue ceilings, and mint green furniture in her home, and she notes that hanging art on a colored wall "accentuates accents in the piece [and] makes it stand out." Interior designer Regan Baker took a "go hard or go home" philosophy on using color in a San Francisco home, painting the spiral staircase bright yellow and hanging curtains that feature vibrant flowers of pink and green. Among the more practical recommendations are exhortations to limit the palette of a room to three or four colors and match the hues of throw pillows, vases, and accessories to wall art. Other suggestions are more freewheeling, such as when product designers Daniel To and Emma Aiston encourage readers to "have fun" and "don't worry about what your family or friends might think." The eye-popping photos are well complemented by the revealing interviews, offering up a variety of perspectives that are sure to spur creativity. This will inspire readers to get bold in their own decorating. *(May)*

The Happy Home: The Ultimate Guide to Creating a Home That Brings You Joy

Chelsea Foy. Sasquatch, $22.95 (176p) ISBN 978-1-63217-461-1

This straightforward debut by *Lovely Indeed* blogger Foy shares ideas on how to brighten up living spaces. "Joy is found in the little moments surrounding us every day," she writes, outlining mostly low-effort projects intended to inspire joy in the home. Foy encourages readers to consider "what moves you, what comforts you, [and] what uplifts you" when decorating, and the projects' flexible instructions provide readers leeway to follow their own design preferences. For example, she suggests that an indoor herb garden can spruce up a kitchen and encourages readers to choose the plants and style of container they prefer. The suggestions emphasize sparking ideas over following directions, as when Foy recommends that readers "play with height and scale" when choosing objects for a "harmonious and welcoming" coffee table tableau and that they consider how children make use of their rooms to "create a kids' room that promotes independence" ("Do they love to read? Are they all about playing with toys?"). The open-ended projects are sure to stir up the imagination, though the lack of concrete guidance might leave some unsure of how to execute their vision. Still, this is a great starting point for generating decorating ideas. *(Apr.)*

ONLINE ONLY

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FICTION

Killing It *Mike Bockoven.* Polis, ISBN 978-1-957957-19-7, May

The Seventy-Five Folios and Other Unpublished Manuscripts *Marcel Proust, trans. by Sam Taylor.* Harvard Univ., ISBN 978-0-674-27101-2, Apr.

NONFICTION

Dismissed: Tackling the Biases That Undermine Our Health Care *Angela Marshall, with Kathy Palokoff.* Citadel, ISBN 978-0-8065-4204-1, Apr.

Get Rich or Lie Trying: Ambition and Deceit in the New Influencer Economy *Symeon Brown.* Atlantic Books, ISBN 978-1-83895-027-9, May

In Search of Perfumes: A Lifetime Journey to the Source of Nature's Scents *Dominique Roques.* HarperVia, ISBN 978-0-06-329795-1, May

These Are the Plunderers: How Private Equity Runs—and Wrecks—America *Gretchen Morgenson and Joshua Rosner.* Simon & Schuster, ISBN 978-1-982191-28-3, May

You: The Story: A Writer's Guide to Craft Through Memory *Ruta Sepetys.* Viking, ISBN 978-0-593-52438-1, May

Children's/YA

Picture Books

From Here to There: A First Book of Maps

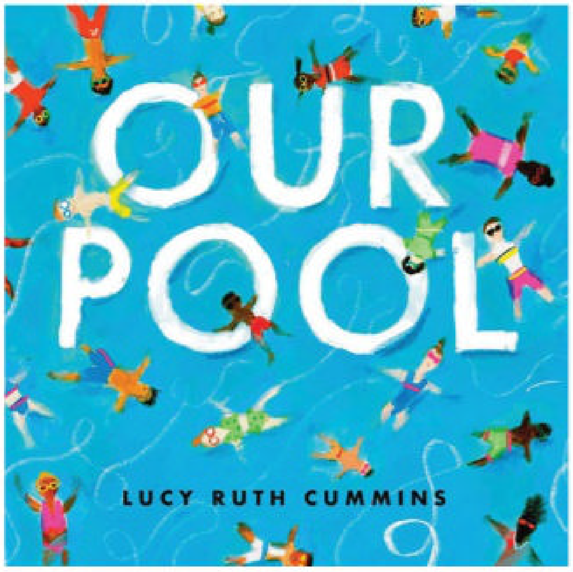
Vivian French, illus. by Ya-Ling Huang. Candlewick, $17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-5362-2511-2

At the start of this cartographic picture book by French (the Knight in Training series), young Zane, portrayed with brown skin, sends his pale-skinned friend Anna an invitation to visit him, along with a hand-drawn map from her home to his. "Clever Zane," says Anna's father; "But he's put *his* house in the middle," Anna objects, "and our house on the very edge. That's not right." As Anna draws her own version, running into issues with orientation and scale, her father shows her variations via a printed map ("Imagine you're a bird.... This is how you'd see things when you looked down") and a family tree. Notes throughout elucidate map-related concepts ("The size of things on a map, compared to real life, is called the map's scale") as the story moves toward its end, in which Anna confidently leads her father to Zane's home. Huang (*And I Think About You*) paints the figures in a loose, naturalistic style, and shows the maps close-up, clearly distinguishing between various iterations. It's a subtle look at the documents' inherent subjectivity that may inspire readers to pursue projects of their own. Ages 3–7. *(May)*

★ Before, Now

Daniel Salmieri. Rocky Pond, $19.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-5934-6197-6

Employing a quiet, unadorned narrative voice and softly burnished colored pencil illustrations, Salmieri (*High Five*) muses about how life is made up of paradoxes and opposites. "In a dark sky floats a blue planet," the book begins, showing a swirling Earth against a starless expanse. Somewhere on that planet is a child: "a small person in a big chair" who eats "squishy oatmeal in a hard bowl." Each page turn moves the maturing primary character, portrayed with black hair and tan skin, and always shown in a green shirt, further on in time. In closely observed, tableau-like spreads, the figure, whose "small head" has "vivid dreams of vast spaces," becomes a school-age child, then a diligent college student and a scientist, then a doting parent ("squishy oatmeal in a hard bowl" appears for another child) and, eventually, a grandparent holding "an old photo in a new frame/... of a small person in a big chair." This intergenerational portrait slowly suggests the way moments can provide anchors and recur—it's a "whoa" kind of idea pitched at just the right level for the target audience. Illustrations portray people of varying skin tones within the family and across metropolitan scenes. Ages 4–7. *Agent: Rebecca Sherman, Writers House. (June)*



In a picture book that's just right for summer, Cummins offers up a lively child's-eye view of a neighborhood pool (reviewed on this page).

★ Our Pool

Lucy Ruth Cummins. Atheneum, $18.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-5344-9923-2

Public pools, those unsung heroes of public good, have found their bard in Cummins (*Sleepy Sheepy*). In vibrant gouache and colored pencil hues that are reminiscent of a schoolchild's paint set, initial pages show a variously inclusive parade of city dwellers "sweating, and smiling, and skip-stepping toward... OUR POOL!" As the illustrations move over, around, and under the be-goggled crowd in compositions ranging from reportorial to bird's-eye view, the story's kid narrator enthusiastically recounts the ritual-like pleasures of pool-going, from getting changed to getting in ("I'm the JUMP-RIGHT-IN! type") to breathless communal reactions over the sun's movements to a final, parting cannonball. In a cleverly executed conceit, the first-person narrator is never tied to a specific individual: when Mom insists on sunscreen, Cummins zooms in on four adult hands brandishing bottles and cans; when the narrator floats behind Mom "like a cape," readers see multiple parent-child pairs moving through the water in a line. It's a joyfully saturated vision of e pluribus unum shown via "an ice-cold bowl of City People Soup!" Ages 4–8. *Agent: Emily van Beek, Folio Jr./Folio Literary Management. (June)*

Maribel's Year

Michelle Sterling, illus. by Sarah Gonzales. HarperCollins/Tegen, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-0631-1435-7

Through a wistful seasonal kaleidoscope that details nearly a year of separation, a young narrating protagonist shares with Papa, who remains in the Philippines, moments of life after their emigration. In January ("First steps,/ first snow./ New country,/ new home"), Maribel and Mama navigate an isolated, cool-hued snowy landscape; a page later, a juxtaposing image shows their homeland portrayed in a warm palette, and "friends and family dropping in for merienda and chats in our courtyard." February sees Maribel struggling with English in an intersectionally inclusive classroom, making a friend, and sending a valentine "on an eight-thousand-mile journey to Papa in Makati." April's "drops of sun on my face" nourish Maribel's optimism as the family celebrates Papa's birthday by making his favorite dish and imagining him by their side. Tastes of dried mango and tamarind appear in a package with a letter promising Papa's arrival before long, and the arrival of Christmas signifies the family's sweet reunion. Digitally colored pencil on paper art from Gonzales portrays in painterly textures and lush borders the family's varied experiences, while Sterling supplies tender exchanges and memories. The result is a richly laid seasonal feast that melds languages and traditions. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Andrea Morrison, Writers House. Illustrator's agent: Alexandra Levick, Writers House. (May)*

Mother of Sharks

Melissa Cristina Márquez, illus. by Devin Elle Kurtz. Penguin Workshop, $19.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-593-52358-2

A Latinx child takes a step toward a

STEM career as a shark scientist in this empowering read from marine biologist Márquez (the Wild Survival series). After a day spent playing at Puerto Rico's Playita Del Condado, Meli begs her mami for just five more minutes, during which a tidal-pool encounter with talking hermit crab Jaiba results in an undersea adventure. Crabs and sea stars scuttle "along ancient sandy highways" around a vibrant coral reef, but all is not right: rising temperatures caused by climate change have bleached parts of the reef, and a mako shark is caught in a net nearby. Meli, portrayed with brown skin, wants to learn more about sharks, but indicates that she's never seen a shark scientist who looks like her. Traversing space and time, Jaiba takes Meli to various locations that would help her move into the field, including to see the "Mother of Sharks," an accomplished shark scientist who, it is soon revealed, is Meli herself. Artist Kurtz (*Windows to Worlds*, for adults) dapples the underwater landscape with plentiful light, while Márquez combines magical and real-world components in this engaging read that champions marine conservation efforts and the power of representation. Ages 5–8. *Author's agent: Alexandra Weiss, Azantian Literary. Illustrator's agent: Seth Fishman, Gernert Co. (May)*

The Pebble: An Allegory of the Holocaust

Marius Marcinkevičius, trans. from the Lithuanian by Jūra Avižienis, illus. by Inga Dagilė. Thames & Hudson, $17.95 (56p)
ISBN 978-0-5006-5326-5

In 1943, narrator Eitan and his best friend Rivka fly a kite from the roof of a house in a gated Jewish ghetto, where they've been imprisoned since Nazi forces arrived the previous spring, heralded by "big black birds." Thin-lined editorial style art by Dagilė, rendered in somber earth tones punctuated with startling swathes of black, show a community trying to carry on: "I could hear children laughing, dogs barking, and women chatting," Marcinkevičius writes. But each individual wears a yellow Star of David, and after people are taken away—including Eitan's father—"nobody ever came home." While giving a violin concert, Eitan has a waking nightmare about a big black bird, a vision that presages the community's destruction in a horrifying conflagration. After "everything went silent," Eitan curls into a ball and becomes "smaller, harder, and smoother, like a pebble." Years later, Rivka, the event's only survivor, finds the pebble and leaves it at a memorial that she visits. The creators don't mitigate the sadness of this sprawling story, but they do challenge readers to consider something equally profound: the blessings and obligations of memory. An end page shows the murdered community embodied as pebbles, and an epilogue describes the objects as "lasting symbols of endurance." Pale-skinned characters frequently reflect the white of the page. Ages 6–8. *(May)*

Fiction

Moth in a Fancy Cardigan (Moth in a Fancy Cardigan #1)

Charlotte Lance, illus. by David Booth. Berbay, $19.99 (136p) ISBN 978-1-922610-57-7

Gary's a nine-year-old gray moth, and the gray cardigan he wears symbolizes his "practically invisible" existence, in which he often wonders what it would be like to be someone else. His popular butterfly classmate Florence, meanwhile, wears a brilliant, colorful cardigan that conceals an apparently un-butterfly-like interest in the color gray, which she sees as "full of possibilities." In a narrative that unfolds with passion and intensity, Australian writer Lance brings the two beings together, toggling back and forth in sections that center each character, portrayed in charcoal-y gray and citron yellow art by Australian artist Booth. After Florence leaves her dazzling cardigan on a park bench, Gary secrets it away and tries it on, finding himself transformed. When Florence confesses the loss of her cardigan—and the misplaced birthday present in its pocket, meant for her beloved grandmother—she learns something that changes her view of herself, and of Gary. School drama and insect details are wittily proffered (cardigans are put on "over one, two, three then four arms") in a lightly wrought be-yourself story about how "Clothes do not maketh the Man, the Woman, the Moth or the Butterfly." Ages 7–12. *(June)*

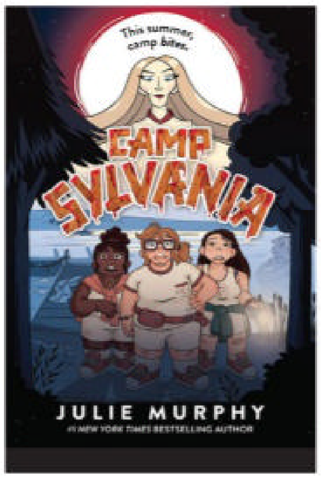
The Boy with Wings

Lenny Henry, illus. by Keenon Ferrell and Mark Buckingham. Andrews McMeel, $21.99 (208p)
ISBN 978-1-5248-8471-0; $12.99 paper
ISBN 978-1-5248-8000-2

British actor and comedian Henry (*Black British Lives Matter*, for adults) touches on issues of inclusivity, prejudice, and personal pride in this lively fantasy adventure. While Tunde, an adopted British-born Caribbean 12-year-old, publicly claims that he doesn't mind not knowing anything about his birth family, his private feelings are "bendier and twistier than a rubber band in a microwave." Still, he's happy with his parents, who share and help him connect with his heritage, and who support him through relentless school bullying surrounding his "beaky" nose. When birds of all kinds begin defending Tunde from bullies, Tunde is grateful for their help, if a little weirded out. But nothing about the events could have prepared him for his suddenly sprouting wings. Tunde is soon summoned by a bird-like people called the Aavians to help combat their enemies, the mammalian Furleenians. Animated illustrations by Ferrell (*Looking for Happy*) depict Tunde's school struggles alongside his high-flying adventures. Though Tunde's unearthing of his paranormal past evokes standard superhero fare, Henry's effusive first-person prose and solid grasp on heartwarming familial and friendship dynamics make for a high-spirited origin tale. A classic-feeling superhero comic by Buckingham (*Dead Boy Detectives*) concludes, depicting further adventures. Ages 8–12. *(June)*

Camp Sylvania

Julie Murphy. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $18.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-0631-1402-9



After years of waiting, best friends and aspiring actors Maggie Hagen and Nora Taylor Whaley are jazzed to finally be headed to Camp Rising Star for three summer weeks. But on the last day of school, Maggie's horror writer father and nurse mother suddenly

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Picture Book Poetics

Books of verse for children feature varied forms.

The Dream Train: Poems for Bedtime

Sean Taylor, illus. by Anuska Allepuz. Candlewick, $19.99 (88p) ISBN 978-1-5362-2834-2

"Just close your eyes,/ snuggle your feet,/ think of your dreams,/ and breathe deep." Across descriptions of nighttime routines, warm blankets, and starry skies, Taylor employs various verse types to usher readers to sleep. As lines embrace traditional bedtime symbols, this volume's three-part structure groups pieces under chronological headings: "Night Arrives," "Shut-Your-Eyes Time," and "Dream Wheels Turning." One poem encourages hopping aboard the eponymous dream train; another presents contemplative questions "Asked by a Pillow" ("How many ticks in a clock?"). Full-bleed mixed-media artwork from Allepuz features grainy, layered chromatic textures as scenes move comfortably between domestic, forest, and metropolitan spaces peopled by animals and by children with various skin tones. In "The Middle of the Night," for example, a child seems to fall asleep on the potty as others snooze in their beds. Accompanying "A Thousand Stars," an adult owl and two owlets doze in a tree outside a town. The whole package soothingly and successfully points the way to zzz's. Ages 2–5. *(Mar.)*

Since the Baby Came: A Sibling's Learning-to-Love Story in 16 Poems

Kathleen Long Bostrom, illus. by Janet Samuel. WaterBrook, $12.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-57768-4

Varied poetic forms—including a limerick, a roundel, and a villanelle—offer up a child's first-person descriptions of adjusting to a new sibling. Long Bostrom kicks off the collection with a haiku about the initial announcement of a fetus in utero ("'Surprise!' Mama says./ 'We are having a baby!'/ Nobody asked *me*"). Subsequent lines from the frank child narrator trace their baby brother's arrival, and emotions that ensue and evolve as the older sibling becomes accustomed to being one of two: "The baby's a strange little dude—/ his habits are truly quite rude." Everyday domestic scenarios (a diaper change, a meal, bath time) feature throughout, while two poems ("Dear God" and "Jesus Was a Baby Too") introduce a religious component to the book. Samuel's unlined renderings, which portray a biracial-cued family whose children are depicted with brown skin, have a luminous softness that suits the text's combination of playfulness and loving kindness. Back matter defines poem types used. Ages 3–7. *(May)*

We'll Make Things Better Together

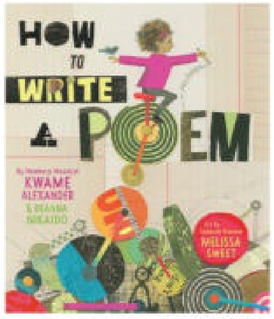
Ben Gundersheimer (Mister G), illus. by Dow Phumiruk. Penguin/ Paulsen, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-593-11019-5

"Everything is better/ Better when we work together" suggestts this message-forward pep talk in verse, which observes collaborative efforts at home and within a racially diverse community. Softly tinted opening vignettes show children portrayed with various skin tones helpfully dispensing toothpaste and finding socks for each other, and different families' breakfasts each prove a family effort ("Mom pours juice—/ It's so delicious... // We laugh and sing,/ then clean the dishes"). Next, a group of children arrives at a park and dons gloves to clear litter, then takes a meal to and performs a play for a sick neighbor. A session tending a neighborhood garden and a freestyle backyard concert round out this cheerfully rendered day of work and play. Alongside Phumiruk's crisp digitally finished spreads, Gundersheimer's lines scan and rhyme satisfyingly. It's an optimistic starting place for discussions about cooperation and mutual aid. Ages 3–7. *(May)*

How to Write a Poem

Kwame Alexander and Deanna Nikaido, illus. by Melissa Sweet. Quill Tree, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-06-306090-6

Emphatic and rhythmic verse instructs readers about the titular subject in this wonder-filled companion to Alexander and Sweet's *How to Read a Book*, in collaboration with poet Nikaido. An opening suggestion encourages openness ("Begin with a question,// like an acorn/ waiting for spring") and beckons readers to take "dive deep into the silent sea// of/ your/ imagination." As vivid descriptions capture sensations of creativity, imperative lines build toward a prompt to put pencil to paper and share the result. Natural motifs weave throughout as children of varied skin tones ecstatically "listen to the grass,/ the flowers,/ the trees—anything// that's friends with the sun." Sweet's striking mixed-media collages use handmade and vintage paper, watercolor and gouache techniques, and even pebbles as they visualize the text's expansive energy via wheels, circles, and spheres. The range of techniques in use supportively connects the ideas of creativity and remixing. The result is a highly welcoming invitation to write that makes clear poetry is for everyone—reader and writer alike. Creator notes conclude. Ages 4–8. *(Apr.)*



Today I Am a River

Kate Coombs, illus. by Anna Emilia Laitinen. Sounds True, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-68364-982-3

Positing that "I can be anything/ everything," meditative first-person lines offer readers a chance to experience nature through the lens of varied subjects—from wind and rain to a snake and a spider. "Heart happy,/ bright/ as a yellow bird," describes a poem titled "Sunlight," while rain is "a skydiver" and a snake is "a paintbrush/ in a summer field." Throughout, Coombs deploys techniques including alliteration, rhyme, and more for an effect that's simultaneously contemplative and declarative. Laitinen's retro-style artwork shows a cast of children, depicted with varied skin tones, frolicking across the seasons and luxuriating in calm surroundings. (Even the wind, described as sometimes raging, produces only smile-inducing bluster.) It's an incantatory portrait of oneness with nature, and a tribute to mindful awareness. An end note suggests ways to use the book for embodied learning. Ages 4–8. *(Apr.)*

Push-Pull Morning: Dog-Powered Poems About Matter and Energy

Lisa Westberg Peters, illus. by Serge Bloch. Wordsong, $18.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-63592-527-2

Westberg's scientific yet silly verse uses a dog's antics to memorably illustrate physics concepts, identified in the table of contents as including energy, force, friction, gravity, inertia, and others. Beginning lines about matter set the tone, introducing the speaker's new pup and the "zillions of wiggly molecules and/ jillions of jiggly atoms" that connect the pair. Later, the titular poem, which tackles the topic of force, chronicles the actions required to walk the pet to and from the vet's ("I *push* open the clinic's door./ My let's-get-out-of-here dog *pulls* on her leash"). Literary techniques, including alliteration and assonance, work in service of the book's topics, while shape poems visualize electricity. Bloch's loose pen and ink art features a brown-skinned protagonist as well as a spotted canine that seems to be always on the go. Throughout this fun example of STEAM at work, the likable pair's comic exploits showcase the way science concepts infuse the everyday. Back matter offers definitions. Ages 4–8. *(Feb.)*

Watch Me Bloom: A Bouquet of Haiku Poems for Budding Naturalists

Krina Patel-Sage. Lantana, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-913747-99-2

Two dozen appreciative haiku celebrate flora such as daffodils, hollyhock, foxglove, and beyond in a picture book that highlights flowers' unique attributes with spare but vivid imagery. Snow-defying snowdrops and Valentine's Day roses open the collection, which builds across the global north's seasonal calendar, from springtime's cherry blossoms and summer's sunflowers up to festive winter poinsettias. Patel-Sage frequently links the varietals to themes such as confidence, growth, and strength. In "Borage," "Planted side-by-side,/ garden stars make perfect friends,/ helping others grow." Hollyhock's "showy faces, look outward,/ proud and confident." Other plant descriptions incorporate intergenerational references: azaleas come "from granny's childhood" and fuchsia is "Grandpa's pride and joy." Appropriately sunny illustrations feature figures of varying abilities, creeds, and skin tones making daisy chains with a caregiver, greeting neighbors, and playing outdoors in a work that's likely to inspire many garden daydreams. Ages 4–9. *(Mar.)*

Where I Live: Poems About My Home, My Street, and My Town

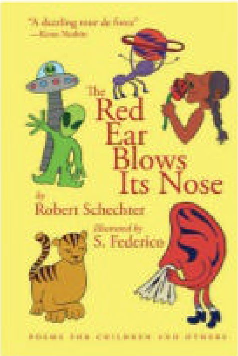
Paul B. Janeczko, illus. by Hyewon Yum. Candlewick, $18.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-0094-2

Sorted into three parts and featuring lines by poets and children's book creators alike, 34 short, winning poems selected by the late Janeczko contemplate the meaning of home and belonging via a strong sense of place. In the book's first section, "Home," Reuben Jackson's "Sunday Brunch" and Gary Soto's "Ode to a Sprinkler" each revel in summers spent locally—on a porch and on neighbors' lawns, respectively. Section two, "Street," features Naomi Shihab Nye's "Spruce Street, Berkeley"; Patricia Hubbell's "Sidewalk Cracks"; and Nikki Grimes's "Block Party," which all consider pavement-related locales. And in the final section, "Town," Lois Lenski's "People" and Nikki Giovanni's "Knoxville, Tennessee" sensorially convey neighborhood encounters. Throughout, Yum's colored pencil and watercolor art portrays racially diverse figures in metropolitan, rural, and suburban landscapes both bustling and quiet. It's a sights-and-sounds anthology that invites readers to observe the appreciable beauty of, as phrased by X.J. Kennedy, "wherever you sit down." Ages 7–10. *(Mar.)*

The Red Ear Blows Its Nose: Poems for Children and Others

Robert Schechter, illus. by S. Federico. Word Galaxy, $29.95 (118p)
ISBN 978-1-77349-134-9

Rhymes abound in this wide-ranging collection of 99 new and previously published poems by Schechter. Grouped loosely by subject, frequently humorous verse relies heavily on ballad stanzas while exploring a variety of topics, from poetry writing to nature and beyond. Some pieces embrace whimsy for tongue-twisty readaloud effect ("Though losing/ is gruesome/ and winning/ is winsome/ I win some/ and lose some/ and losing/ I wince some"). Others lightly touch on more existential questions, such as "Unlucky," which concludes: "I bought a coffin./ It's worth a try./ With my bad luck./ I might not die." Most successful are those previously published, including "Colors," which invites reflections on perspective ("I wonder if what you call red/ would look like red to me"). Federico's occasional ink drawings provide doodle-like imagery, contributing to the collection's casual feel. Figures' skin reflects the white of the paper. Ages 7–up. *(Apr.)*



Through Thick and Thin

Fellowship stars in nine friendship portrayals.

★ When Little Owl Met Little Rabbit

Przemyslaw Wechterowicz, trans. from the Polish by Polly Lawson, illus. by Emilia Dziubak. Floris, $17.95 (40p) ISBN 978-1-78250-774-1

In a magnificent wood, an owl family lives amid the branches of an old oak, while a rabbit family resides among its roots; each has "a small, sleepy baby." The two young creatures know about each other ("You remind me of our neighbor Little Owl when you tilt your head like that," Mother Rabbit says), but due to the animals' opposing waking periods, they've never met. When at last, a full moon rises, they find themselves face-to-face. "Can you teach me to hunt in the dark?" Little Rabbit inquires; "Can you teach me to hop through grass?" Little Owl asks. To keep in touch, they leave daily gifts for each other (a feather, a dirt clod), and make a wish that engenders a mystical connection between them until full-moon nights offer precious playtime. Wechterowicz thoughtfully explores a growing attachment in this quiet logistical fable, while Dziubak creates a lush, intricately developed forest world that plays the sunlight of Little Rabbit's daytime world off the moonlight and warm interior glow of Little Owl's nocturnal life. Ages 3–6. *(Apr.)*

Not a Book About Bunnies

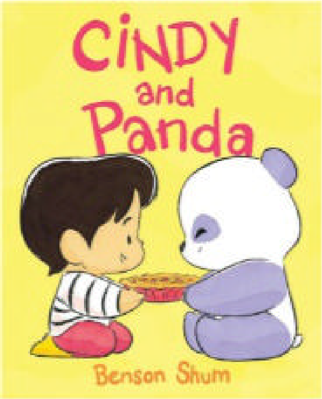
Amanda Henke, illus. by Anna Daviscourt. Starry Forest, $17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-951784-09-6

A confident and chatty porcupine stars in this giggle-inducing book, which includes more about bunnies than the title states. Narrating via speech bubbles, Porcupine graciously welcomes the reader ("Thank you for opening this book. You saw the title and you still want to read it"), before launching into a monologue about all the traits that make porcupines "even more dazzling" than bunnies. For instance, the protagonist describes how porcupettes start out life fuzzy ("Can you think of any other animal so soft, so cuddly, so lovable?"). Meanwhile, a small white rabbit shadows and calls out to the narrator, who understandably doesn't take kindly to the bun's efforts at self-insertion ("What is it with these carrot-crunchers?"). When at last Bunny's motives become clear, the reveal leads to a winning conclusion that emphasizes the way good friends celebrate one another. Digital artwork layers colors and markings for a painterly effect, and a note, ostensibly written by Bunny, concludes. Ages 3–7. *(Feb.)*

Cindy and Panda

Benson Shum. Clarion, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-06-324818-2

Child baker Cindy likes "to do things her own way," but friendship encourages her to embrace flexibility in this winsome tale. On an excursion to pick rhubarb from the garden, Cindy, who cues as East Asian, meets Panda. The two become fast friends; a montage shows the duo playing dress-up, having a tea party, climbing a tree, and more. The fun continues when the purple and white animalian "sous-chef" joins Cindy in the kitchen, where the creature's natural inclination to "Chomp! Munch! Slurp!" results in a missing ingredient and some "sour" feelings (and luckily no consequences connected with rhubarb's notoriously toxic leaves). The predictability of the pair's eventual reconciliation makes it no less sweet, especially given the lively, *Calvin and Hobbes*–like exuberance in Shum's watercolor and ink scenes. A pie recipe concludes. Ages 4–8. *(May)*



A Friend Like No Otter

Nelly Buchet, illus. by Andrea Zuill. Union Square Kids, $17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-4549-4452-2

An unassuming pet rock becomes a source of connection for two marine animals in this read about the joy of sociability. Otter's pet rock accompanies her everywhere: "She tucks Rock in her pocket. The one in her armpit where she keeps special things, like rocks, that don't talk, but listen." When Manatee sees the fun Otter has with Rock, she tries to join in, but while "Rock doesn't mind"—Buchet's refrain offers subtle humor and a through line—Otter isn't so sure. Though the trio hit their stride, catastrophe strikes when Rock accidentally sinks to the ocean floor, causing big emotions in both creatures. Plain blue watery backdrops focus attention on the foregrounded animals, which Zuill expressively depicts in sketch-like lines as affable and emotive. After a cast of ocean denizens improbably save the day, Otter embraces collaborative play for a conclusion that reinforces the value of conviviality. An author's note concludes. Ages 4–8. *(May)*

Rani's Remarkable Day

Saadia Faruqi, illus. by Anoosha Syed. Clarion, $19.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-358-53677-2

Faruqi encourages social risk-taking in this flatly empowering picture book via a royal protagonist who ventures beyond the isolation of palace life and discovers camaraderie. For Princess Rani, who reads as South Asian, "being the only princess in/ the kingdom was boring,/ tedious,/ dull." Attempts to play with her mother (busy planning a new highway), father (busy considering food for a party), and the prime minister (just busy) fall flat, so the determined child takes things into her own hands. Though the prime minister is horrified that Rani might interact with "everyday people," she heads to the beach with Prince Baby, where a rival sandcastle-builder eventually morphs into a playmate: in order to overcome loneliness, she endeavors to "take a risk,/ work together,// make a friend." Adjective trios ("valiant,// brave,/ courageous!") enliven uncomplicated plotting. Heavy on pink, Syed's animation-style digital illustrations add a dose of comedy with their depiction of Rani's bodyguards' seaside antics. Ages 4–8. *(May)*

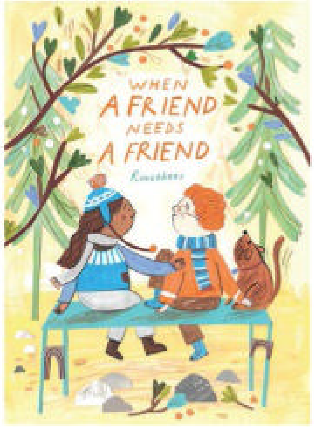
Outside Amelia's Window

Caroline Nastro, illus. by Anca Sandu Budisan. Two Lions, $17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-5420-2785-4

American redstart fledglings inspire a solitary child to befriend neighboring children in this kindhearted picture book. Though Amelia, who uses a wheelchair and reads as East Asian, is "a bit lonely," she avoids meeting the children who move in next door. "She just didn't think that she could./ Not anymore./ Not like she used to," and instead stays inside reading fantasy tales. But when a redstart lands on her windowsill and snatches a ribbon, Amelia becomes enraptured by the bird's efforts to build a nest, and then eagerly watches as two eggs produce chicks. Reading about the birds' epic migration makes her think, "*If they can do it…// …perhaps so can I?*"; she then ventures out, playing with a light-skinned boy and tan-skinned girl. Budisan's dreamy artwork employs a mix of pencil and watercolor techniques, creating a delicate effect that suits Nastro's quiet narration and its interweaving of natural elements. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

When a Friend Needs a Friend

Roozeboos. Scholastic Press, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-338-81394-4



Roozeboos portrays big feels with sensitivity in this tender story about two best friends navigating one's need for alone time. Oskar, a white-presenting child with curly red hair and round glasses, loves to build. He and narrating chum Aya, portrayed with brown skin and long brown hair, seem to be happy regulars at a construction site where workers, shown with various skin tones, greet them: "Hi, Little Buddies!" But Oskar also sometimes gets "quiet or grumpy," and one day his emotions run so deep that he just wants to be left alone, leaving Aya unsure about how to react: "How could I comfort him? What could I say?" As Oskar builds a tall tree house that he occupies, solo, across multiple seasons, Aya sends paper airplanes from an open window. With support from the construction crew ("Sometimes Oskar has big feelings and needs a little space"), Aya eventually finds a way to connect with Oskar, and a metaphorical visual gestures toward the usefulness of gaining perspective. In a book that largely resists oversimplifying a child's intense emotions, scribbly textures and mixed-media collages capture layered feelings, and reactions, on display across time. Ages 4–8. *(Feb.)*

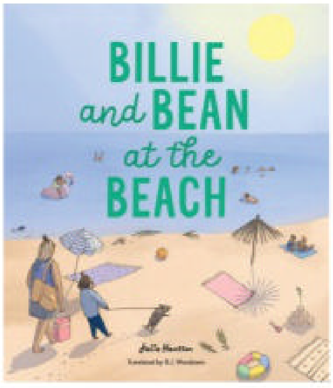
The Moon Is a Ball: Stories of Panda & Squirrel

Ed Franck, illus. by Thé Tjong-Khing, trans. from the Dutch by David Colmer. Gecko, $19.99 (80p) ISBN 978-1-77657-493-3

In this mellow chapter book readaloud, likable best buddies Panda and Squirrel argue, philosophize, play, test, and care for one another over the course of nine interlinked short tales that articulate the importance of companionship. In "A Long Journey," the pair take a literally snail-paced approach to adventure, discovering that the life of the mind can transport one just as far as steps on a path. "Dollop" sees the two besties naming their feelings after they care for an abandoned duckling. And "Who Are You?" presents the playfellows grappling with Panda's temporary amnesia after an accident. Throughout, straightforward writing centers the friends' devotion, giving space to expressive dialogue ("I'm never bored when I'm with you") and affectionate acts ("Squirrel puts her paw in Panda's big paw"). As Franck models charming rapport and low-stakes companionship, Tjong-Khing's delicate artwork provides nature-filled scenes of glorious suns and a bamboo forest. Ages 4–10. *(Apr.)*

Billie and Bean at the Beach (Billie and Bean #1)

Julia Hansson, trans. from the Swedish by B.J. Woodstein. Orca, $21.95 (32p) ISBN 978-1-4598-3441-5



Black pup Bean offers support to reluctant swimmer Billie, portrayed with light brown skin, in this enigmatic narrative about a child's ups and downs during a day at the beach. Opening lines set the tone: while "Billie doesn't want to be here" and rests in the shade, "Bean loves the beach!" Mom "thinks Billie should go for a swim too," but a near-immediate jellyfish sting causes the child to wish she hadn't tried. Luckily, Bean's discovery of a sand-buried snorkel mask nudges Billie to try again, and the payoff—ineffable views of "an underwater garden full of shells and stones and all sorts of creatures"—give readers a wonderful Billie's-eye view of the calm underwater surrounds. Infused with purples and peaches, Hansson's luminous pencil and watercolor art aptly uses perspective, light, shadow, and the round-bodied protagonists' positions to embrace the book's quiet tone. Ages 6–8. *(Feb.)*

continued from p. 61

announce that they're instead sending her to Camp Sylvania, "a place for big dreams, big fun, and big weight loss," run by fitness guru Sylvia Sylvania. Maggie's mom, who is obsessed with her daughter's weight, was once Sylvia's peer at the same camp, and she wants Maggie to attend now that Sylvia's bought it. Most of the counselors prove taken with influencer Sylvia and her Scarlet Diet. But a rebrand isn't the only change the camp has undergone: the property is now haunted, advertised activities are off-limits, underage attendees are asked to donate blood, and soon, campers start disappearing. Through Maggie's witty first-person narration, Murphy (*Dear Sweet Pea*) reveals the fat camp's horrors, both benign and supernatural, as Maggie, who experiences performance anxiety, realizes that she and her body are just right the way they are. It's a character-driven summer camp romp that takes on anti-fat bias while underscoring how parents don't always get things right. Maggie is white, Nora has brown skin; racial diversity exists among the campers. Ages 8–12. *(June)*

Control Freaks

J.E. Thomas. Levine Querido, $18.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-64614-305-4

A driven Black middle schooler attending Denver's prestigious Benjamin Banneker College Prep must become a team player in Thomas's debut, a witty competition drama. Frederick Douglass Zezzmer has a 57-step plan to become the World's Greatest Inventor, but Doug's birth father—a former Denver Broncos player who recently reentered his life—has a different vision for him: attending the Elite Juniors sports camp. Doug believes that participating in, and winning, a weeklong STEAM and sports tournament will persuade his father into letting Doug pursue his own dreams. But to succeed, Doug must collaborate with classmates from varying disciplines, including art and athletics, something that forces him out of his comfort zone and challenges him in new ways. As Doug navigates budding friendships, dynamic rivalries, and tense familial relationships, he realizes that he doesn't have to do everything on his own, and that not everyone is as they seem. By utilizing multiple POVs, including that of Doug's stepbrother, Thomas lays the groundwork for a telling that prioritizes characters' interiority as well as their impact on each other's lives. While Doug's determined voice is the primary focus, the rotating narratives showcase each of the racially diverse characters' individual stressors, delivering a well-rounded accounting that is better for its multiplicity. Ages 8–12. *(June)*

Lei and the Fire Goddess

Malia Maunakea. Penguin Workshop, $17.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-5935-2203-5

Twelve-year-old Anna Leilani Kamaʻehu, who is part white, usually loves spending her summers with her grandmother, Tūtū, in Volcano, a rainforest village in Hawaii. But her Boulder, Colo., classmates have started mocking her whenever she brings up Hawaiian stories such as Pele the Fire Goddess, prompting feelings of shame about her heritage. Now Anna isn't looking forward to her trip at all; disinterested in listening to more stories about her culture, she instead wants to "come and visit like a tourist." When Anna questions Pele's existence, Tūtū warns her that she'd best show respect, since she's "on Pele's land now." Still disbelieving, Anna picks a sacred ʻōhiʻa lehua flower, a blasphemous act, resulting in Pele's triggering earthquakes, sinkholes, and volcanic eruptions across the island and sending a giant hawk to kidnap Anna's best friend, Kaipo. Accompanied by Ilikea, a talking bat, and Makani, the breeze, Anna must win back the goddess's favor to save Kaipo and the rest of Hawaii. Scenes peppered with pidgin dialect, Hawaiian words, and descriptions of snacks such as li hing mui gummi bears establish a keen sense of place. Anna feels too Hawaiian to fit in at school, but too haole, or white, to feel at home in Hawaii—a struggle that aptly center themes of identity and connection in Maunakea's energetic, adventuresome debut. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Patrice Caldwell, New Leaf Literary. (June)*

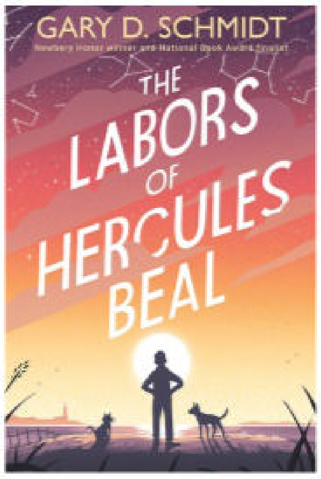
The Ruby Code

Jessica Khoury. Scholastic Press, $17.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-338-85928-7

Khoury (the Skyborn series) layers a future New York City and a role-playing fantasy adventure to create an inventive techno-thriller reminiscent of *Ready Player One*. White-cued 13-year-old Ashton "Ash" Tyler, beset by bullies at soccer and his widowed mother's cruel boyfriend at home, increasingly retreats into virtual reality games. After Ash helps a man who is being assaulted, the man gives him a box that turns out to contain a single-player VR game, *Glass Realm*. As Ash plays, he encounters a shopkeeper named Ruby who seems strangely unlike a non-player character. Alternating chapters follow white-haired, red-gold-eyed Ruby, a resilient teenager gradually resisting a voice ordering her to stay on script. Ash's arrival helps her to break free, and together they follow a quest to seek the truth about Ruby's past and her true nature, an arc that soon takes on a new urgency around real-world events. Intrusive drone surveillance and dangerously immersive VR add a cyberpunk feel to a grim setting. Khoury loads tremendous heart into explorations of free will and sentience throughout this fast-paced cross-genre read, which is accessible to gamers and nongamers alike. Context clues suggest racial diversity in the secondary cast. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Lucy Carson, Friedrich Agency. (June)*

★ The Labors of Hercules Beal

Gary D. Schmidt. Clarion, $19.99 (352p) ISBN 978-0-358659-63-1


GARY D. SCHMIDT
Newbery Honor winner and National Book Award finalist
THE LABORS OF HERCULES BEAL

Reeling from his parents' sudden death in a car accident a year and a half ago, 12-year-old Hercules Beal lives with his older brother Achilles in Truro on Cape Cod, which Hercules calls "the most beautiful place on the planet." Achilles has reluctantly given up a journalism career to oversee the family business, now with the assistance of his girlfriend (per Hercules, "the Vampire"). After Hercules starts at a new school, his flinty humanities teacher—recently retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel Hupfer—tasks the middle schooler with re-creating his mythological namesake's famed 12 labors. Initially skeptical about the classical mythology application project, Hercules slowly discovers occasions in his own life that loosely parallel the classical myths. By performing these tasks and growing close to people because of them, he develops a loving, vividly depicted community that presents opportunities for healing. Schmidt (*Pay Attention, Carter Jones*) employs his signature narrative style, balancing scenes of humor and affecting gravity through Hercules's droll narration ("You have to admit, that was pretty brave"), which nimbly springs from labor to labor. It's a moving hero's journey that serves as a reflection on the durability of mythology and the necessity of community. Characters cue as white. Ages 8–12. *(May)*

Code Red

Joy McCullough. Atheneum, $17.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-5344-9626-2

Thirteen-year-old, white-cued Eden feels listless after a shoulder injury and sudden growth spurt force her to quit gymnastics. Now, instead of attending practice, she's enrolled in IRL school for the first time in two years and spends long hours alone since her divorced mother—the CEO of a menstrual products company—is rarely home. Eden struggles to make friends, until she and Guatemalan American classmate Maribel bond during suspension following their physical retaliation against a bully who taunted Eden about her mother's occupation. The tweens become fast friends, and Eden finds herself looking forward to volunteering at the food pantry run by Maribel's mother. It's there that Eden meets Raven and her transgender son Will, both white-cued, who have begun a community project in which they make reusable menstrual pads for people around the globe. Eden—accompanied by Maribel—wholeheartedly joins Raven and Will's altruistic efforts, putting her at odds with her corporate-minded mother. McCullough (*Enter the Body*) sheds light on issues of injustice, misogyny, and period poverty, as well as varying other challenges surrounding financial precarity, via Eden's warmly rendered personal journey from laser-focused athlete to stalwart activist. Eden's evolving relationship with her mother, and their opposing ideals, provide additional narrative heft. Ages 8–up. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (June)*

The Gray

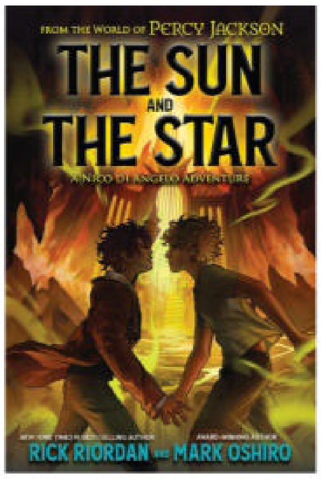
Chris Baron. Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends, $18.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-86471-0

Prescribed a device-free summer to mitigate his generalized anxiety condition and occasional panic, which take him to a misty, distorted world he calls "the Gray," 13-year-old New Yorker Sasha steels himself for a month upstate. He'll be visiting his widowed aunt, Ruthie, near the closed-down Jewish summer camp she and late Uncle Lou used to run. Beset by town bullies and memories of his late uncle, and feeling unmoored without his video games, Sasha experiences anxiety spikes and sensory overwhelm. Connecting with nature at the old camp and revisiting Uncle Lou's Talmudic stories coaxes him to decompress, however, and he opens up to new activities and budding friendships that challenge his assumptions about others and reveal the benefits of change. Baron (*The Magical Imperfect*) intricately captures teen friendship dynamics, interweaving quiet suspense by gradually divulging a pivotal, dark moment in the town's recent past. Sensory-rich settings and viscerally imagined depictions of anxiety manifest an immersive world without pulling punches, carving a hopeful path for Sasha's mental health management. An author's note shares Baron's lived experience with anxiety. Characters cue as white; Sasha and his family are Jewish. Ages 10–14. *Agent: Rena Rossner, Deborah Harris Agency. (June)*

The Sun and the Star: A Nico di Angelo Adventure

Rick Riordan and Mark Oshiro. Disney Hyperion, $19.99 (480p) ISBN 978-1-368-08115-3

Set in Riordan's Percy Jackson universe, this thrilling queer standalone from Riordan and Oshiro (*You Only Live Once, David Bravo*) follows two demigods in love—Nico di Angelo, teenage son of Hades, and Nico's boyfriend, Will Solace, son of Apollo—on their journey to Tartarus, the Underworld's deepest abyss. Summer at Camp Half-Blood is over, but Nico and Will have nowhere to go, so the pair is planning a quiet season with the camp's staff when cries for help start haunting Nico's dreams. Nico believes he's hearing the voice of Bob, a Titan who helped two beings escape Tartarus only to become trapped there himself. After a prophecy directs Nico to find the entity calling for him, he and Will commence a quest to do just that—never mind that Hades has banned the living from the Underworld, that Will needs sunlight to survive, or that something seems to be shadowing their every step. Reprising the Greek myth–grounded books' goofy humor, high-stakes action, and whimsical worldbuilding, the collaborators weave in tender romance and emotionally complex ruminations on change, self-identity, and mental health, balancing adventure with heart and heft. Characters are intersectionally diverse. Ages 10–14. *Agents: (for Riordan) Nancy Gallt, Gallt & Zacker Literary; (for Oshiro) DongWon Song, Howard Morhaim Literary. (May)*


FROM THE WORLD OF PERCY JACKSON
THE SUN AND THE STAR
A NICO DI ANGELO ADVENTURE
RICK RIORDAN and MARK OSHIRO

A Season Most Unfair

J. Anderson Coats. Atheneum, $17.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-665912-35-8

The only child of a chandler in medieval St Neots, Scholastica, known as Tick, has always enjoyed candle-making. Time spent in comfortable conversation with her beloved father and a yearly visit to the merry Stourbridge Fair help make up for the pungent work of rendering tallow. Tick is especially excited for this year's work: because of her papa's increasingly blurry sight, Tick believes she will be allowed to make the delicately painted beeswax Agnus Dei charms that bring in the most money. But Tick is outraged when a tanner's young son, Henry of Holgate, arrives, having been invited to apprentice to her father. She's also wounded that Papa seems to be pulling away from her—no doubt because she's becoming "young-womanly," something she's noticed has caused distance between her friends and their fathers. Henry's initially shoddy workmanship alarms Tick, and fearing that profits will suffer because of it, she heads to the fair with her own wares, aiming to prove how much her papa needs her. Coats (*The Night Ride*) deftly layers headstrong Tick's efforts to remain close to her papa, and her annoyance with traditional gender roles, in a feminist tale with a persuasively rendered historical setting. Characters read as white. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Ammi-Joan Paquette, Erin Murphy Literary. (June)*

★ At the Speed of Lies

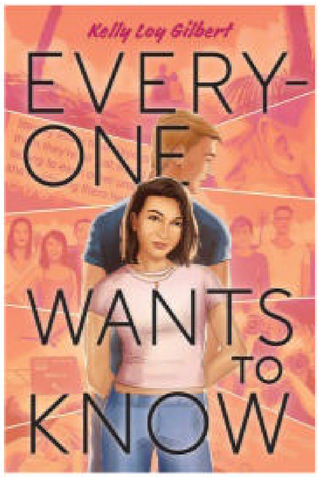
Cindy L. Otis. Scholastic Press, $19.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-3388-0676-2

Former CIA officer Otis (*True or False*) crafts a timely, pulse-pounding mystery that examines issues surrounding conspiracy theories, media literacy, and social media's prevalence. Canandaigua, N.Y., high school junior Quinn Calvet—who has rheumatoid arthritis and uses a wheelchair—runs a well-known Instagram account called The Whine, where she reports on events within her community, such as track meets and extracurricular proceedings. When fellow student Cade Bird requests that Quinn use The Whine to promote his new club, Defend Kids, she's initially hesitant, seeing Cade as a bully. She relents, however, when he reveals that Defend Kids was founded to help locate two kidnapped youths. After the club—and The Whine—go viral, Quinn, her classmates, and the rest of the community are swept along on Cade's hunt, until cracks begin to appear in the missing kids' mystery. Though the messaging is potent, it is never polemic, and by employing tense atmosphere and perceptive characters, Otis attentively interrogates social media's part in spreading misinformation, and how even the smallest lies can escalate to catastrophic outcomes. Most characters are white. Ages 12–up. *(June)*

★ Everyone Wants to Know

Kelly Loy Gilbert. Simon & Schuster, $19.99 (384p) ISBN 978-1-6659-0136-9

Via a white and Chinese American teen's poetic narration, Gilbert (*When We Were Infinite*) delivers a binge-worthy drama starring a flawed, richly characterized family of TV personalities. Having grown up appearing on reality show *Lo and Behold*, 16-year-old Honor Lo, her twin brother Atticus, and their three older siblings learned to be wary of outsiders to protect the family brand and project an idealized version of their lives. Things upend when Honor's parents separate. Her father moves to Brooklyn, while she, Atticus, and their mother move to a new Bay Area town, where her mom starts pressuring the twins to engage in brand campaigns like their influencer siblings. Distrustful of new classmates after a former friend betrays Honor to a gossip mag, and unsure if she wants to follow her siblings' path, Honor throws herself into planning a reunifying family vacation. But as she grows closer to an enigmatic crush and bombshell revelations deepen family fractures, Honor must reevaluate her commitment to preserving her perceived reality. A fast-moving opening propels readers headfirst into the family's spectacle-like drama, while sensitively handled themes surrounding "mixed-race trauma," online privacy, and the consequences of cultivated personae round out the intensely emotional plot. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Adriann Ranta Zurhellen, Folio Literary Management. (June)*



Love Letters for Joy

Melissa See. Scholastic Press, $18.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-338-87538-6

Seventeen-year-old Joy Corvi, who has cerebral palsy and identifies as being within the asexual umbrella, is adamant about becoming the first disabled valedictorian at Manhattan's Caldwell Preparatory Academy; the only thing between her and her goal is rival Nathaniel Wright. She also feels that she has bigger things to worry about than relationships, until her friends and classmates begin pairing off, brought together by an anonymous student known as Caldwell Cupid. Suddenly feeling that she's missed out on something important, Joy writes to Caldwell Cupid for advice ("Is there a formula for romance?"). Their correspondence starts out innocuous enough, but the more they talk, the deeper Joy falls for the mysterious matchmaking entity. Alongside moments of budding romance, Joy contends with worries about her future. Through a pleasant combination of text message chains and email exchanges, See (*You, Me, and Our Heartstrings*) organically develops a lighthearted courtship that tackles themes of queer identity and highlights one teen's experience living with a disability. Chapters alternating between Joy's vulnerable narration and the enigmatic Caldwell Cupid add playful suspense leading up to Cupid's reveal. Joy and Nathaniel read as white. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Emily Forney, BookEnds Literary. (June)*

The Quiet Part Out Loud

Deborah Crossland. Simon & Schuster, $19.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-66592-712-3

Eighteen-year-old, white-coded Mia Clementine must navigate sudden natural disaster to atone for past mistakes in Crossland's enlightening debut. Following a public scandal involving her mother's affair with her town's pastor, Mia has spent the past five months running away from her strict evangelical Christian upbringing. She's also been avoiding her sweet, accommodating white-coded ex-boyfriend, Alfie Thanasis. But after she runs into him at a coffee shop and flees, Mia yearns to make amends. She reaches out to him via phone call, and the two teens are tentatively reconnecting when a massive earthquake hits, separating them once again. As Mia sets out onto San Francisco's devastated streets to find Alfie, she encounters strangers along the way who dispense advice that forces her to confront her isolating behaviors. Alternating chapters featuring Alfie's second-person perspective as he lovingly recounts his and Mia's relationship, while Mia's reflective yet stubborn first-person voice drives the present-day timeline. The novel's drawn-out pacing diminishes suspense, and Mia's slim characterization makes some revelations feel unearned. Even so, the fully realized, intersectionally diverse supporting cast and fervent discussions about religion imbue this surreal-feeling character study with intensity. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Mollie Glick, CAA. (June)*

Take

Jennifer Bradbury. Atheneum/Dlouhy, $18.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-4169-9009-3

In this genre-blending adventure, Bradbury (*A Moment Comes*) injects a high-stakes mystery with adrenaline. Recent high school graduate Cara plans to spend her summer working various odd jobs, rock climbing, and gearing up for her gap year traipsing through Patagonia. When Nat, her ex-boyfriend and fellow rock-climbing enthusiast, reappears in town, however, it sends her into an emotional spiral. She does her best to avoid Nat, until her depressed father—whom she hasn't spoken to in months—disappears. He leaves behind a trailer filled with clues in the form of old photographs, annotated maps, Beckett Friedrich climbing guides, and coded notes that Cara's convinced only history-loving Friedrich superfan Nat can unravel. Her father's trail leads the teens into the Cascade Mountains, where they face strenuous challenges, learn more about Cara's family's past, and find their way back to each other. Bradbury interweaves Cara's urgent first-person narration with brief diary entries by an adventurer from the 1940s, which tell a parallel story of young love hampered by racism during WWII. Cara's tenacity and grit make her a heroine to root for, and her determination to find her father no matter the cost conveys a complex, heartfelt relationship. Cara is white and of Japanese ancestry; Nat cues as white. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Robin Rue, Writers House. (June)*

Going Bicoastal

Dahlia Adler. Wednesday, $20 (336p) ISBN 978-1-250-87164-0

White, Jewish 17-year-old Natalya Fox must make what she feels is an impossible decision in this summery, *Sliding Doors*–inspired rom-com about risk-taking and second chances. Nat's relationship with her mother has been strained for three years, ever since her mom moved from New York to California to pursue a life-changing career opportunity. But when her mom offers Nat a summer internship, she's torn between going to L.A. to patch up their relationship and staying with her dad in N.Y.C., where she's been attempting to drum up the courage to make a move on the cute redheaded girl she keeps seeing around the Upper West Side. Adler (*Home Field Advantage*) forgoes forcing Nat to make a choice by structuring the book across two simultaneously occurring timelines. Instead, alternating chapters chronicle Nat's life in L.A., where she and her fellow intern—a frustratingly charming boy—bicker constantly, and in New York, where she learns that the redhead is cooler than Nat imagined. Though the dual story lines occasionally rehash the same material, leading to few surprises, Adler's enticing prose teems with a vibrancy born of intimately realized bicoastal settings and titillating romantic possibility. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Patricia Nelson, Marsal Lyon Literary. (June)*

Best Vacation Ever

Jessica Cunsolo. Wattpad, $11.99 paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-990259-96-8

Seventeen-year-old best friends Lori and Faye couldn't be more different: Lori actively avoids being the center of attention, while Faye revels in the way heads turn every time she enters a room. When Faye's older brother Adam invites the girls on a trip to Cuba with his four friends—including Faye's current hook-up, Kellan, and Lori's secret gym crush, Dean—they're excited to embark on what they feel will be the best vacation ever. But Faye and Lori's carefree holiday is dominated by boy troubles. Lori is struggling to find the confidence to approach Dean. Faye, on the other hand, is desperate to keep her friends-with-benefits situation with Kellan secret from Adam, even as she wrestles with her desire to make her relationship with Kellan official. As their summer unfolds, the duo are forced to vacate their comfort zones and reevaluate their own friendship. Superficial characterizations and melodramatic conflict contribute to shallow-feeling interpersonal dynamics. Cunsolo (the With Me series) nevertheless skillfully renders—via expressive prose and evocative play-by-plays of pool party hijinks—fun-in-the-sun atmosphere that makes for a breezy seasonal read. Characters present as white. Ages 14–up. *(June)*

The Chaperone

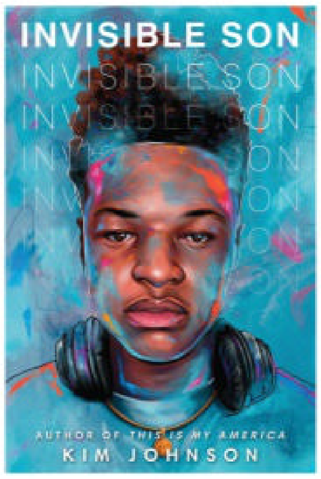
M Hendrix. Sourcebooks Fire, $18.99 (448p) ISBN 978-1-728-28485-9; $11.99 paper ISBN 978-1-7282-6000-6

In this ominous dystopian future narrative, young women in New America must live by a conservative moral code and always be chaperoned until marriage; those who deviate from these expectations are either shunned or go missing. Though high school senior Stella Graham, 17, quietly chafes against these rules, she steadfastly lives by them under the watchful eye of her beloved chaperone, Sister Helen. But when Sister Helen dies suddenly and mysteriously, Stella begins to question the system she feels trapped in. Her new chaperone, Sister Laura, encourages Stella's curiosity by providing her with forbidden books and secretly teaching her self-defense. Bolstered by the new knowledge, Stella finds subtle ways to rebel in school and at home, but as the public investigation into Sister Helen's death draws the attention of seemingly omnipresent national political party the Minutemen, Stella finds herself watched more closely than ever. Stella's initial naivete about New America's history makes her revelations surrounding its dark past even more harrowing. This thrilling and evenly paced, dialogue-driven tale by Hendrix deftly explores issues of women's rights, class privilege, and oppression through a familiar yet impactful lens. Most characters cue as white. Ages 14–up. *Agent: John Cusick, Folio Literary Management. (June)*

★ Invisible Son

Kim Johnson. Random House, $18.99 (416p) ISBN 978-0-593-48210-0

In February 2020, after spending two months in a juvenile correction facility for a crime he didn't commit, 17-year-old Andre Jackson is finally on his way home. His probation officer insists that Dre has been given a new lease on life, but Dre is worried about what his grandparents will think of him upon his return to the family's rapidly gentrifying corner of Portland, Ore. Still, Dre is determined to clean up his reputation, which involves confronting his best friend Eric Whitaker, who allowed Dre to take the fall for Eric's crime. He quickly learns



that Eric is missing, and Eric's sister Sierra—Dre's first love—doesn't understand why no one, not even their white adoptive parents, is looking for him. As Dre embarks on his own investigation, societal conflicts—including Covid and protests surrounding the murder of George Floyd—and Sierra's parents' increasingly suspect behavior, complicate matters. Smooth pacing and anticipatory tension imbue this hard-hitting mystery with a chilling atmosphere. Via Dre's contemplative voice and a timely setting, Johnson (*This Is My America*) balances intrigue with socially conscious ruminations on systemic and environmental racism, and the power in reclaiming one's narrative. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Jennifer March Soloway, Andrea Brown Literary. (June)*

Ode to My First Car

Robin Gow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $20.99 (352p) ISBN 978-0-3743-8843-0

Bisexual 17-year-old Claire Kemp's summer plans—escaping her family's cramped apartment in Trappe, Pa., to hang out with her transgender best friend and secret crush Sophia—are dashed when she totals Lars, her beloved first car. To pay off fines from the crash, she starts working at a local nursing home, where she meets 85-year-old lesbian Lena. As Lena recounts stories from her own past that help Claire feel more confident in her queerness, Claire begins dating classmate Pen. She hopes that their budding romance will lead to her much-anticipated "sexual debut" and also help her get over her feelings for Sophia. But Sophia's own new relationship with a controlling boy means she has less time for Claire, causing their friendship to fray. Meanwhile, familial conflicts surrounding whether or not Claire and her brother Chris, who is gay, should come out to their parents put a damper on Claire's summer. Gow (*Dear Mothman*) thoughtfully unpacks a variety of issues, including economic anxiety, guilt, and identity exploration via empathetic verse poems narrated by Claire to Lars. Though its many through lines don't always cohere, this is a sweet, encouraging read with a big heart. Major characters read as white. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Jordan Hamessley, New Leaf Literary. (June)*

Ride or Die

Gail-Agnes Musikavanhu. Soho Teen, $18.99 (384p) ISBN 978-1-64129-420-1

Black 16-year-old Naloli Tamryn Crawford and her white-cued best friend, Ryan Pope, are daredevils; they live for the thrill of adventure, even when it sometimes gets them into trouble, as when a car-surfing incident results in a hospitalized classmate and Loli's indefinite grounding. But resourceful Loli is used to maneuvering her way around obstacles, and punishments are no exception. After sneaking out to a party, Loli encounters an unidentified boy in a dark closet, whom she calls Mysterious Voice. She later receives a handwritten note from MV challenging her to a game of risks ("Life does get a bit dull sometimes. So why don't we spice it up and play a game?"). Via letters and anonymous chats sent over several months, Loli and MV exchange dares that include breaking and entering and sneaky thievery. As the dares become more hazardous—and as Loli starts to fall for MV—Loli jeopardizes her relationships with Ryan and her parents, and even her own future. While character motivations feel thin, Loli's adrenaline-seeking personality makes for a propulsive first-person narration that boasts edge-of-the-seat thrills and fast-paced mystery in Musikavanhu's high-octane debut. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Lauren Bieker, FinePrint Literary Management. (June)*

Wolfpack

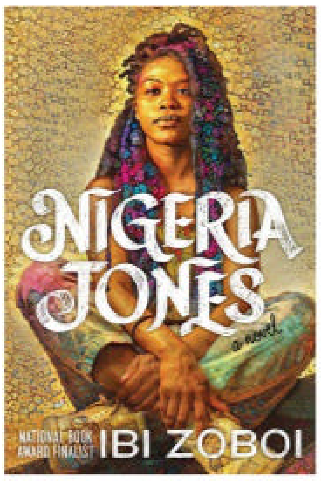
Amelia Brunskill. Little, Brown. $18.99 (272p) ISBN 978-0-316-49455-7

Brunskill (*The Window*) employs absorbing verse and a keen grasp on the teen voice in this stirring psychological thriller about nine teenage girls raised in a cult. Havenwood is supposed to be just that—a haven for those devoted to charming and kind leader Joseph and his teachings. Despite having grown up at Havenwood, when nine young women are forced together by happenstance, they endeavor to "be loyal/ not just to Havenwood/ but also to one another," establishing an unwavering bond that guides them through conflicts both interpersonal and within Havenwood's strident society. Alongside their individual public passions, such as apiculture, baking, and foraging, the girls embark on private endeavors. Some of these ventures, including a sexually intimate relationship between two of the teens, are forbidden in Havenwood. When one of them goes missing, the others search for her and, in doing so, begin to unearth the corrupted underpinnings of their perceived utopia. Though the characters are minimally described, intricately detailed alternating third-person POVs that center individual perspectives as well as a lush, collective voice spin an eerie recounting that fluidly connects familiar themes of maturation, love, and chosen family with Havenwood's unusual, highly insular religious movement. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (June)*

★ Nigeria Jones

Ibi Zoboi. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $19.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-288884-6

Sixteen-year-old Nigeria Jones explores complex relationships with her famous freedom-fighter father and her all-Black commune in this striking portrait by Zoboi (*Star Child*). All her life, Nigeria has been homeschooled by teachers in the Movement, a Black activist community created by her father. But a year after her mother abruptly leaves, Nigeria learns that she wanted Nigeria to attend a majority-white Quaker high school, contrary to her father's wishes and the Movement's teachings and ideals. Nigeria chooses to attend anyway, and this decision causes ripple effects throughout her community and proves to have drastic implications for her relationship with her dad. These first steps outside her comfort zone help Nigeria learn more about who she is and who she might want to become, and with that knowledge comes a new understanding of what it means to choose one's own life path. Through Nigeria's powerfully resonant first-person voice, Zoboi's mesmerizing storytelling soars. The novel's chapter headers and narrative structure recall the framework of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, providing a fitting foundation for thorough interrogations



of love and loyalty, personal and communal history, spirituality, and white supremacy and misogyny. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Elena Giovinazzo, Pippin Properties. (May)*

Comics

Team Trash: A Time Traveler's Guide to Sustainability (Books for a Better Earth)

Kate Wheeler and Trent Huntington. Holiday House, $22.99 (80p) ISBN 978-0-8234-5227-9; $14.99 paper ISBN 978-0-8234-5491-4

Two seemingly mismatched middle schoolers must partner up when tasked with a sustainability-themed assignment in this concise graphic novel debut by Wheeler and Huntington. Studious Charlie, portrayed with brown skin, has little faith that class clown Oliver, an East Asian–cued boy who prefers superheroes to research, will be much help with their project. The two routinely butt heads until they stumble upon a classmate's project called Time Bot, a clunky object resembling a go-cart. When the duo climb into the machine, they're mysteriously transported—with a "BWOOP!" and a "POP!"—to 72 CE Pompeii. Before they can travel back home, however, they must gather data surrounding recycling and sustainable practices or risk being stuck in the past forever. Subsequent time jumps to Edo-era Japan, 18th-century Philadelphia, and 19th-century N.Y.C. result in rapid-fire history lessons about resource management and environmental safety systems. While the overall pacing is sometimes choppy, the wide-ranging timeline provides glimpses into sustainability procedures spanning centuries, and the chronological momentum emphasizes the practice's evolutionary elements and connectivity across cultures. These snack-size history lessons—rendered in eye-catching color and easy-to-follow paneling interspersed with brief instructional guides—employ lightly slapstick humor to deliver digestible informational fare. Ages 10–14. *(Aug.)*

The Color of Always: An LGBTQIA+ Love Anthology

Edited by Brent Fisher and Michele Abounader. Wave Blue World, $19.99 paper (144p) ISBN 978-1-949-51824-5

This celebratory graphic novel collection of short stories, edited by contributors Fisher and Abounader, spans myriad genres and styles united by affirming messages about queer identities. Some stories forefront giddy romantic love, as in "Tethered" by Mario Candelaria, Laura Helsby, Jão Canola, and Scott Ewen, in which teens Alex and Jamie tentatively move from exclusively text conversations to talking on the phone. Others, such as "Long Away" by Tilly Bridges, Susan Bridges, and Richard Fairgray, center familial love both supportive and bittersweet, as when a transgender girl travels back in time via a fantastical comics shop to visit her late father, who asserts his unconditional affection for the teen. Self-love is also a common thread, as in Lillian Hochwender and Gabe Martini's "Sea Change," a poetic visual spectacle in which old sea maps leading to the ominous Deep serve as a metaphor for gender identity exploration. Full-color and tonal illustrations capture varying moods and aesthetics: Christa Harader and Katie Hicks's "Leaves" gives *Steven Universe* vibes, while Priya Saxena and Jenny Fleming render their work "Letting It Fall" in a weathered retro style. Economic storytelling paired with youthful ambiance offer an enjoyable and high-quality sampler plate of queer graphic fiction. Ages 16–up. *(June)*

Nonfiction

Alone: The Journeys of Three Young Refugees

Paul Tom, trans. from the French by Arielle Aaronson, illus. by Mélanie Baillairgé. Groundwood, $21.99 (144p) ISBN 978-1-7730-6927-2

Adapting documentary film *Seuls* into an engrossing book for young readers, debut author Tom—who was born in a refugee camp in Thailand—follows three unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Canada after fleeing their respective homelands. In each chapter, tight first-person narration alternates between the book's subjects, following second-person lines directed at readers ("Imagine that you're going away"). In Tehran, the parents of 13-year-old Afshin fear he'll be killed in the Iranian wars; when they send him away to keep him alive, he looks forward to the journey without realizing its long-term implications. In Burundi, 13-year-old Alain, the son of a political prisoner, escapes with his mother and brothers to Kenya, where a two-year delay and a tragic event leave the boys in limbo. For Patricia, a queer 16-year-old in Uganda, "if other people find out… it means prison and persecution for our family and even worse," but leaving means losing "the enveloping weight" of her mother's love. Baillairgé's digital illustrations employ a limited palette that reflects the flags of Burundi, Kenya, and Iran, and a stylized, minimalist approach hones three complex story lines down to a sharply rendered tale whose chapters trace experiences of "Leaving Everything Behind" through the subjects' developing "Hope for Tomorrow." A glossary concludes. Ages 8–12. *(May)*

The Other Pandemic: An AIDS Memoir

Lynn Curlee. Charlesbridge Teen, $19.99 (176p) ISBN 978-1-62354-350-1

This heartbreaking memoir by Curlee (*The Great Nijinsky*) chronicles "how it was to grow up and live as a gay man in the United States" before and during the HIV/AIDS crisis. Taking an elegiac tone, Curlee describes his childhood in 1960s North Carolina. Quick-moving subsequent chapters recall Curlee's experiences participating in the disco scene on Fire Island, his impulsive move to California in 1979, and his return to N.Y.C. in the early 1980s, where he and his friends struggled to understand why so many gay men were "dying horrible, gruesome deaths." While perceived comparisons to Covid-19, as outlined in an introduction, are minimally explored, Curlee briefly covers their medical and social differences and similarities, as well as the pervasive impact they each had on society. Sidebars about HIV/AIDS succinctly detail the facts, and Curlee's straightforward prose capably conveys the era's worsening bias and fear. Most powerful of all, however, is the novel's focus on Curlee's inner circle and the people he lost to the crisis, including his partner, making for a thought-provoking history about what it was like to live during that time, and a good start for further exploration. Extensive back matter concludes. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Liz Nealon, Great Dog Literary. (June)* ■

BookLife Reviews

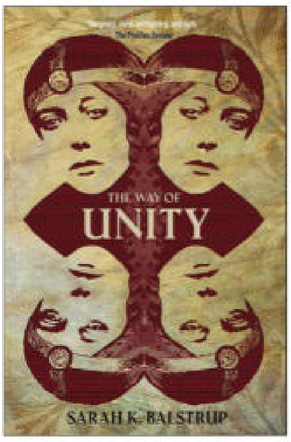
BookLife Reviews are paid reviews of independently published books.
A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

The Way of Unity

Sarah K. Balstrup | Burning Mirror Press
450p, trade paper, $17.99, ISBN 978-0-645-47470-1



Balstrup's ambitious, accomplished debut brings rare imaginative power and rigor to religion, ritual, and holy war in fantasy, introducing a fascinating world of faith and fire while continually challenging—and rewarding—genre expectations. The story builds early to conflagration and revolution, with the holy order of Intercessors attacking a ruling family after its ruling head, who holds the position of Skalen, commits pointed heresy by urging rejection of the Intercessors' authority. In one of Balstrup's many bursts of rousing and inventive language, Reyan Terech thunders that the visions of the First Diviner said nothing about Intercessors, white-robed psychics who "purify" spirits through fire.

Taking on the fervent and psychically gifted, though, comes with a cost, and soon holy fire rains down. In the aftermath, it's daughter Sybilla who is Skalen. Readers might expect that her efforts to avenge her family and end the rule of the Intercessors will drive the book, but Balstrup's interest isn't the usual heroic violence of epic fantasy—instead, it's in rich questions of power and belief, the weight of leadership, and what comes after a hard-won victory that tears a civilization apart. The narrative vaults ahead in time as Sybilla faces hard choices, rebellion, and a faith that will not die.

This standout dark fantasy debut takes on rich questions of faith, fire, rebellion, and power.

Great for fans of Tamsyn Muir, Christopher Buehlman's *Between Two Fires.*

The seriousness with which Balstrup presents that faith sets this singular series-starter apart just as surely as its polished prose, mature themes, and unconventional structure. Balstrup has conjured up gorgeous, creepy holy texts, chants, rituals, and prayers, the depiction attentive to how faiths adapt over time, how they draw from and distort older belief systems, and—crucially—what they mean in the lives of adherents. *The Way of Unity* boasts weird magic, original creatures, flights of horror and beauty, and a thirty-year sweep that builds to an enticing promise of more. The book's long and sometimes demanding, but readers who favor fantasy of literary ambition with fully imagined lives and beliefs will find this a feast.

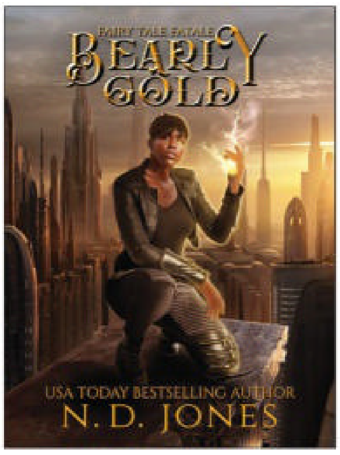
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Bearly Gold

N.D. Jones | Kuumba Publishing
356p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0BTXS8K26



Jones (*Forever Yours*) delivers a clever and electrifying adventure on an alternate Earth alive with shapeshifters and volatile politics. A civil war has trapped bear shifter Dr. Teresa Pérez-Soto and her clinic filled with human, bear, and elephant shifter orphans. Fayola, an ultra dangerous impundulu—a large bird shifting telepath who drinks blood—is on a mission from her government, The United Wake of Benekal, to extract the doctor from the war zone but not the children. Successfully completing this last mission will free Fayola from her mandatory military service and allow her to return to her beloved father. Always stalwart, this time she shows empathy when human child Jwahir calls her "Dela Eden," her savior, and Fayola risks everything to transport the children to safety.

Adhering to her mantra, "The better a soldier I become, the easier the missions will be, and the quicker I'll be able to return home," Fayola is an imposing figure in her human form and nearly indestructible in her bird form, with huge wings, a beak that can penetrate elephant hide, and the ability to generate golden lightning. At the start Jones focuses on developing the strong female characters and the intricate world building, though the plot accelerates when The Wake's leaders, intrigued by Fayola's empathy and negotiating skills, choose not to court martial her. Instead, she's assigned to the new Criminal Exploitation Unit to save children in trouble. These include Jwahir, who sends word that her adoptive bear shifter father is abusing her.

SF fans will embrace the strong female lead and unique shapeshifters.

Great for fans of Eowyn Ivey's *The Snow Child*, Robert McCammon's *The Wolf's Hour.*

Jones masterfully constructs an original world of extraordinary shapeshifters, a militaristic society, a rich political environment, and a mission to combat human trafficking. With a nod to the tale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Jones sets a diverse cast in an immersive, compelling world in a story that evokes loyalty and the desire to do good. Readers will find this a winner.

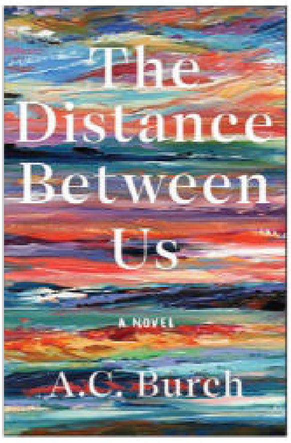
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

The Distance Between Us: A Novel

A.C. Burch | HomePort Press
372p, e-book, $5.99, ISBN 979-8-9868654-0-9



The second novel in Burch's HomePort Chronicles series, a celebration of community in a Provincetown artists' colony, is less a book you read than one you summer within. Burch's P-Town bursts with appealing and amusing characters, surprise connections, a passion for art and inclusion, and a persistent inviting dishy-ness. The first chapter, here, notes that a wealthy widow loves Miss Marple, Jessica Fletcher, and the novels of Edith Wharton, and that's a promise of what's to come in the subsequent chapters: an apparent murder, a shocking act of vandalism at a new museum, a local police sergeant who's reputed to be "one pheasant short of a full brace," and an intrepid sleuth.

That would be Helena Handbasket, the former housekeeper who has inherited the Staunton fortune, serves as executive director of the Staunton Trust, and is ready to take on whatever role she must— "invincible artistic diva," "the glamorous, successful museum director," sail-boat racer, and eventually an undercover identity—to protect the HomePort Artists' Colony. *The Distance Between Us* balances a smart detective story with a delightful portrait of a diverse, sparkling community, set amid cocktails, gallery openings, drag shows, fundraisers (Helena notes "Fundraising is a lot like doing drag, folks. Fake it until you make it"), and classic Cape Cod saltboxes. Burch blends the pulse of P-Town today—its washashores, its legendary showgirls, its summer people, its onion layers of secrets—with fascinating considerations of its history and highlight-worthy toasts to its beauty. On the view from nearby Truro: "Provincetown was a radiant necklace, the illuminated Pilgrim Monument its lavalliere, the night sky a black velvet backdrop."

A delightful novel of mystery and community in a beautifully evoked Provincetown.

Great for fans of Jeannette de Beauvoir, Paul Lisicky's *Later: My Life at the Edge of the World.*

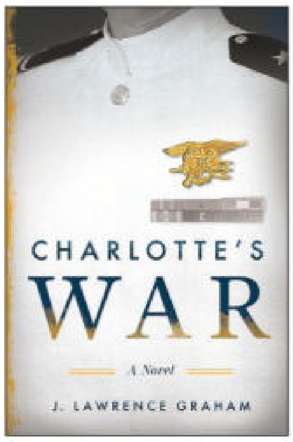
The mystery charms and surprises, but the novel's deeper joy is its enticing depiction of a town and its people proudly out of the mainstream—the prose, plot, and dialogue gush and bubble like champagne uncorked. Readers who start with this entry will feel invited right in, though the first novel in the series, *HomePort Journals*, is also recommended.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Charlotte’s War

J. Lawrence Graham | Greenleaf Book Group Press
440p, hardcover, $29.95, ISBN 979-8-886-45042-2



Mid-century U.S. foreign conflicts illuminated through a humane heroine.

Great for fans of Elizabeth Spencer’s *No Place for an Angel*, Bob Shocochis’s *The Woman Who Lost Her Soul.*

“We Americans are handicapped by our own culture when it comes to negotiating inventively,” writes Charlotte, the anthropologist protagonist of Graham’s sweeping, incisive novel, a book that charts both her life as a pioneering thinker, writer, and advocate for peace but also the continual global conflicts of her era, that Cold War stretch of twentieth century between the second World War and the abattoir of Vietnam. Charlotte, like Graham, believes in peace, negotiation, and understanding—as a student at Harvard she issues a “fusillade” against Henry Kissinger, a young colleague and sparring partner, against the idea of the great powers “drawing lines on maps that made no sense with respect to cultural differences.”

Those words haunt a novel that brings spirited, illuminating context to decades of conflict. Graham emphasizes, through the experiences of Charlotte and also fascinating chapters digging into the life experiences and political development of both Kissinger and Ho Chi Minh, how the roots of the Vietnam War were nurtured long before the bumptious 1960s, and how thinking like Charlotte’s—and possibly her doomed acquaintance Jack Kennedy—might have saved innumerable lives. The novel often eschews traditional scene-driven drama for summarizing, explanatory, and epistolary modes, though this approach is smartly controlled, never diminishing narrative momentum. He’s especially good at connecting culture, mass media, and ideology.

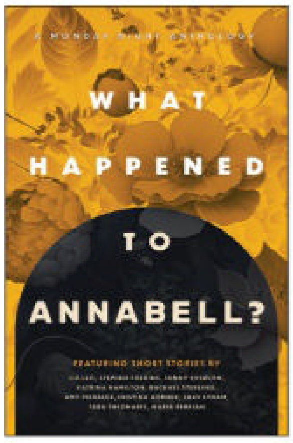
That’s because the suspense of *Charlotte’s War* is in how the globe itself will get swept up in the minds and ideologies Graham investigates. Still, his heroine is arresting, her mind a pleasure to spend time with, with deep, sometimes surprising personal connections to wars and men ravaging the globe. Graham writes movingly—and with a refreshing lightness of touch—about Charlotte’s personal life: dating, sorting out marital responsibilities, being a career-minded woman. Her impulse toward finding solutions through our common humanity rather than a Kissningerian obsession with power burns bright.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

What Happened to Annabell? A Monday Night Anthology

Edited by Maria Berejanet al. | 84th Street Press
135p, e-book, $5.99, ISBN 978-1-956273-08-3



An inspired, surprising anthology imagining a woman’s life from a tombstone prompt.

Great for fans of Ellen Datlow’s *When Things Get Dark*, Philip Fracassi’s *Beneath a Pale Sky.*

In this fun anthology with a clever premise, 18 short stories and one poem explore the same provocative question: what happened to Annabell? That prompt was inspired by old, incomplete couples’ gravestones spotted by Katrina Hamilton in cemeteries, where one spouse’s century-past death date is listed and the other’s simply—mysteriously—isn’t. This anthology’s starting point is an imagined headstone where one spouse’s end is in stone (“Clarence, 1891–1933”) but the other’s isn’t: “Annabell, 1887–”. The authors conjure a mix of quirky, wicked, morose, and even darkly comedic circumstances that explore the many possibilities leading to this outcome.

The third in the Monday Night Anthology series of collections of fictions inspired by a shared prompt, *What Happened to Annabell?* offers a delightful abundance of imaginative worlds and characters. In “Bubbe in the Kitchen,” Annabell is a deceased grandmother bound to return to her kitchen every Thanksgiving to cook Kasha Varnishkes for her family. The wit of this tale creates a compelling contrast with “I Remember,” a somber, lyrical portrayal of immortal love. “ROSE Recruiting” thrives as a cult piece with dark humor and plenty of fun sass, while “The Beast” and “The Blue Clover Café” dip into the fantasy realm. Contributing author Rachael Sterling masterfully compels Annabell to seek equality in a male dominated world, while fellow Stephen Folkins cleverly strips Annabell of politeness and makes her a town’s most disgruntled citizen.

The anthology explores a wide variety of themes including revenge, second chances, independence, and grief. Ghosts, magic, time travel, and mayhem are just a handful of elements featured in these narratives. The pacing and organization of stories creates an easy flow of suspense and tension. Inevitably, one or two tales don’t measure up to the well-crafted plots and inspired play of the best, here, but most will appeal to readers of inventive and speculative short fiction.

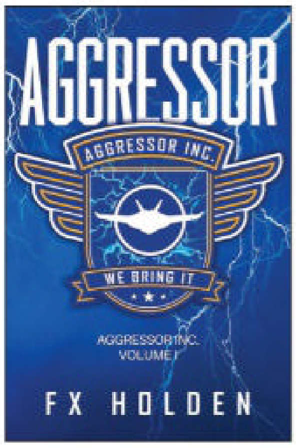
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

EDITOR’S PICK

Aggressor: The Aggressor Series, Book 1

FX Holden
450p, e-book, $8.99, ASIN B0BRYJ1GRH



This superior tech-thriller finds fighter pilots infiltrating a blockaded Taiwan.

Great for fans of Paco Chierici’s *Lions of the Sky*, J.D. Narramore’s *The Nameless Height.*

Holden’s high-tech, near-future geopolitical thriller starts a series and, as it hits the highs that have long set Holden’s books apart, stands as an inviting jumping-on point for new readers. Here’s all the inventive full-throttle action, multifaceted perspectives of suspenseful global conflicts, and convincingly detailed weapons technology—always described on-the-fly, dazzling without slowing down the story. *Aggressor*’s a treat for readers who, like Holden’s charismatic pilot Karen “Bunny” O’Hare, want to get into the air already but also want to believe in the hardware. Set in 2036, *Aggressor* takes off quick. Aggressor Inc., a private military contractor (motto “We Bring It”), has been providing fighter jets and training to Taiwan, but now an Aggressor team is trapped there behind a Chinese blockade.

True to its name, though, the company is pushing matters: having secured an extension on its contract, Aggressor plans to sneak more planes to the island—chief among them a next-gen stealth fighter, the Black Widow. That setup means daring infiltration as tensions mount in Washington, Beijing, and the U.N., and Holden blends the excitement of the mission—and the inevitable complications—with passages from the perspective of all interested parties, including the Chinese. Holden, as always, avoids stereotypes, and his Bunny proves an arresting hero. She “burns” to fly fast and proves capable of quick, decisive action on air, land, and sea.

The pace is quick, but Holden studs the tale with resonant grace notes that make its future conflict feel real. As the British get embroiled, and China threatens war, readers get fascinating asides about hypersonic weapons systems, the divergent development of AI in the East and West, what a campaign to air-drop supplies into Taiwan would look like, and a Pentagon official’s consternation at the impact of global conflict on his 401(k). But it’s crisp, thrilling action and an appealing new cast that makes this one soar.

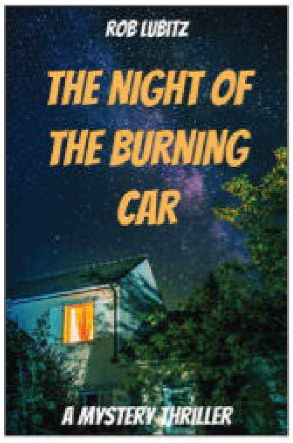
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: A

MYSTERY/THRILLER

EDITOR'S PICK

The Night of the Burning Car: A Mystery Thriller

Rob Lubitz | Twist of Fate Press
368p, e-book, $2.99, ASIN B0BTB3J8Q9



This page-turning historical thriller from Lubitz (*Breaking Free*) offers crime, court drama, and restitution in satisfying measure. One night in 1948, Billy Dalton saves Lacey Evers and her baby from a fiery car on a North Carolina roadside. The mother-daughter pair disappears, and Billy passes out. Once he's conscious, the authorities inform him he imagined the scene. It's clearly a cover-up, but he's no match for the sadistic Sheriff Huck Harkins and his lecherous judge brother who lord over Kane County like mobsters. More than a decade later, Lacey finds Billy and recounts the scandalous incidents of that night. They unite against the Harkins in court, risking their lives and the safety of their loved ones.

With pulse-thumping action and strong characterization, Lubitz dramatizes racism and corruption in the South leading up to and during the Civil Rights era. Billy's and Lacey's points of view alternate every few chapters, revealing dysfunctional family histories before their life paths join. Although Lacey's tale is sensational, Billy shines as an unhappily married alcoholic consumed by repressed anger who gropes for happiness. Disfigured by the burning car, Billy can't help but engage in self-sabotage when faced with others' kindness, until the crucible of the Korean War reframes his existence so that he finally welcomes a fulfilling life. His quiet awakening and Lacey's decision to fight for justice are satisfying in themselves, as is the accompanying suspense. How will they avenge themselves against the unyielding political machine?

Billy and Lacey's shift from victims to survivors and then agents of restitution entertains yet highlights American atrocities like lynching. The story is a study in how exposing crime dismantles a community until oppressed are empowered. Told in straightforward language and boasting a cast of well-drawn side characters, this crime-court drama will please fans of American historical fiction and law-and-order aficionados.

A page-turning thriller about crime, corruption, and justice in the midcentury South.

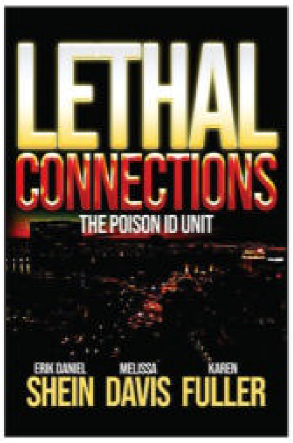
Great for fans of John Grisham's *A Time to Kill*, Susan Carol McCarthy's *Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands.*

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Lethal Connections: The Poison ID Unit

Erik Daniel Shein, Melissa Davis & Karen Fuller | World Castle Publishing, LLC
191p, e-book, $5.99, ISBN 978-1-960-07622-9



In the swamps of Louisiana, a body is discovered floating in the murky waters of the Wetlands Observatory. Not an unusual day for Detective Lance Knight from the nearby St. Bernard's Sheriff's Department. The manner of death, though, and the case that follows prove anything but. When more victims are discovered around the waters of Chalmette, Louisiana, Lance and the coroner, the indomitable Gina Goodwin, discover a most unusual common thread: each has venom in the bloodstream, from what Gina describes as "snakes with a venom I've never encountered before." (And she'd know—she adores herpetology.) From there, the case slithers into surprising territory, including the underbelly of a drug ring operated by a reputed witch practicing black magic.

Lethal Connections pulses with spry dialogue ,surprising bursts of tension and danger, and a plot as slippery as a swamp copperhead. For all the fast-moving procedural fun, though, Knight possesses an insightful perception that imbues the storytelling with emotional weight and resonance. Insights into the life of the widow of a victim who cheated on her, for example, bring welcome humanity to the case, as does the winning repartee between the detective and a smirking coroner, quick to deploy the "stink-eye" when appropriate, who has it in her to star in her own mystery series.

The three co-authors' voices and interests blend into unison but also likely enrich the varied personalities and areas of expertise of this strong cast of characters. Gina's introduced, in one scene, "elbow deep in internal organs," while Lance struggles, a bit, with questions like whether he should pull out a chair for her at an Italian restaurant. His minor uncertainty is the kind of winning detail that keeps readers invested, not just in the bodies discovered among the reeds but in the sleuths on the case. The mystery is crisply told, the killer a surprise, and local color and folklore are engaging.

A detective facing Louisiana poisonings may find the killer too close for comfort.

Great for fans of Tess Gerritsen, D.J. Donaldson.

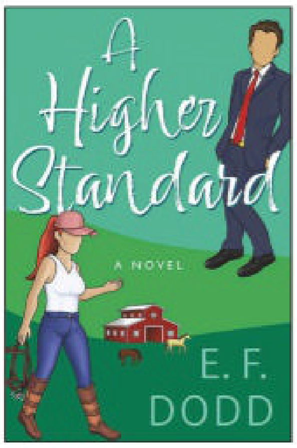
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **B**

ROMANCE

EDITOR'S PICK

A Higher Standard

E.F. Dodd | Sugar Beaver Books
330p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 979-8-9862880-4-8



Snarky banter keeps the edge on the pure escapist joy of an optimistic city/country romance, in Dodd's third novel (after *Earning It*). Boston real estate developer Gideon West has traveled to Mimosa, North Carolina to close the deal on a new bedroom community for Charlotte, but he doesn't account for becoming smitten with the mayor's daughter Everest Kennedy, who had hoped to acquire the same property to expand her equine rescue Second Chance Farms. Everest tries to convince herself that learning how to interrupt his plan is her reason for spending time with Gideon, while Gideon takes the risk that dating Everest might lead to the sympathetic mayor recusing himself from the town board's approval of the development.

Dodd dives in quickly with a bold meet-cute to lead with a heady mix of antagonism and attraction between the characters, which she successfully shifts toward a warm connection over the course of the story. Horse lovers will find plenty of upbeat content despite the rescue theme, from Gideon's embarrassing fall off a very gentle horse, to the ruin of his fancy shoes while addressing a horse's tummy trouble, to the rehabilitation of a mother-child pair. Gideon's willingness to come along for surprise horse tasks guides readers to warm to him.

Vibrant secondary characters play a strong role: Everest's friends encourage her to trust her staff and let herself have some fun instead of obsessing over her work, while Gideon's old friends/professional colleagues uselessly urge him not to turn a townie fling into a project liability. The tension between the potential couple is extended by outside interruptions that let them discover how much they enjoy one another. Although the ending is a bit implausible, it leans toward compromise rather than forcing one of the characters to entirely forgo the life they love.

Fans of enemies-to-lovers romance will smile, especially if they love horses.

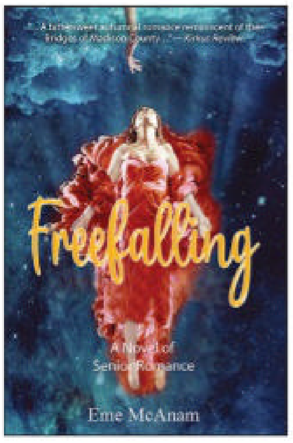
Great for fans of Kari Lynn Dell's *Reckless in Texas*, Michael Bracken's *Unbridled Love.*

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

ROMANCE

Freefalling: A Novel of Senior Romance

Eme McAnam | Autumn Stories Publishing
358p, trade paper, $17.99, ISBN 979-8-9871217-0-2



Debut novelist McAnam offers a unique romance, flashing between a woman's battle with dementia, her father's battle with the same illness, and her successful career running a five-star hotel and her discovering romance while in her sixties. Charlotte O'Malley relishes her satisfying career at the Tiffany Hotel in St. Paul, Minnesota, and though she occasionally wishes she had found her soul-mate, she enjoys her friendship with best friend and assistant Christopher. As her father's dementia worsens, Charlotte faces the reality of her father not recognizing her. When she meets Lutheran pastor Brandon Peterson while staying at a resort on Lake Superior, Charlotte is surprised by her almost instant attraction to him, feeling as though she has found the perfect man. There's a catch, though—he's married, leaving Charlotte feeling guilt and pain.

McAnam's senior romance capably highlights the allure and physical attraction between Charlotte and Brandon and the ensuing complications, focusing on her timeless beauty and the empowerment she feels as a result of her life experiences. During the on-again, off-again relationship, Charlotte meets Stefan, a trail guide at the lake resort, as they enjoy hikes together and cement their relationship. As Charlotte encounters further tragedies, Brandon returns, and through it all McAnam touchingly depicts her sensuality and femininity, a refreshing departure from the typical portrayal of over-sixty women as merely senior citizens.

McAnam also highlights Charlotte's struggle with the sexual abuse she suffered as a child at the hands of her father. This material is thoughtful and humane as Charlotte reconciles her concern for her father with the reality that, due to the disease, he is no longer the same person who abused her, even as she still bears the physical and emotional scars. McAnam's richly drawn novel, complete with enigmatic characters who face real-life struggles, is sure to resonate with romance fans of all ages.

Flashbacks reveal a woman with dementia's career and romances in her sixties.

Great for fans of Pamela Kelley's *The Nantucket Inn*, Julia Clemens's *Sunset on Whisling Island.*

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

ROMANCE

Haunt: Loveletting, Book 1

Christina Maraziotis | Existential Publishing
774p, trade paper, $29.99, ISBN 978-1-959776-01-7

A NOVEL
CHRISTINA MARAZIOTIS
HAUNT
LOVELETTING BOOK I

A sumptuous epic of dark romance set in the wild American West and centered on a young woman, a notorious outlaw, and a courtly man of wealth, Maraziotis's sprawling debut is the kind of book whose ideal reader will happily spend a season in it. Running more than 750 pages, with much to be resolved in future books, *Haunt* both challenges and rewards in its uncompromising ambition, its lyric prose and surging emotions, its slowly teased secrets, wrenching violence, and—to borrow Maraziotis's phrase—"lustful tenderness." It's at times familiar, with a simmering love triangle and scenes of frontier rescues, yet it's too original to settle into any genre, as Maraziotis spices the tale with adventure, romance, tragedy, and even horror.

Mac, the strapping man who saves protagonist Charlotte from a bear attack, is considered a "degenerate, a cold-blooded killer." After time in his "shadowy aura," Charlotte—herself falsely accused of manslaughter—will face imprisonment, assault, and other dire predicaments. Maraziotis doesn't shy away from the grisly or taboo: to free herself from captivity, Charlotte seduces a machete-wielding guard while their naked bodies are "covered in the murderous blood and evil stains of human debris."

That's perhaps the least sexy clinch in a novel that generates legitimate heat, especially after a second male lead, ranch owner William Griffiths, pleads Charlotte's innocence. Will's got secrets of his own but is gentleman enough, in a scene of sparkling turned-on comedy, to refuse a whiskey-drunk Charlotte's affections despite what he calls "the tormenting stiffness that nearly bursts my virile member asunder." Maraziotis digs into the men's pasts in flashbacks, ensuring each is as developed and compelling as Charlotte. Fast-paced scenes and inventive perils keep the pages turning despite the novel's length. Campfires, shootouts, and equine companionship are given fresh excitement, and the epic scope, darkness, and refusal to stick to familiar beats will please readers who relish immersive, provocative romance-tinged storytelling.

This epic, lyric adventure blends dark romance, horror, and a Wild West love triangle.

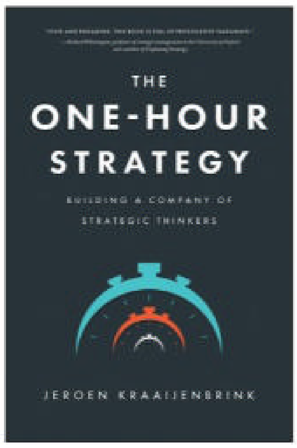
Great for fans of Diana Gabaldon, Téa Obreht's *Inland.*

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A-**

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

The One-Hour Strategy: Building a Company of Strategic Thinkers

Jeroen Kraaijenbrink | River Grove Books
122p, mass market, $16.95, ISBN 978-1-63908-030-4



This tightly focused, highly original lesson about organization strategy demonstrates, through engaging storytelling and clear-eyed insights, the urgency of inspiring everyone within a company to think about strategy as part of their everyday jobs—and that everyone, up and down the hierarchy, dedicates an hour to thinking about it on a steady schedule. (Executives daily; managers weekly; employees monthly.) Kraaijenbrink (*No More Bananas*) makes the case that strategy is a job duty for everyone through brisk dialogue and scenes as he tells the story of new marketing employee Martin's first week at a company called Waters & Flows.

Through a series of lively meetings, Martin discovers how this "One Hour Rule" works throughout the company, how three key questions (known as RPM) help calibrate strategy, and how this approach ensures strategy is more smoothly executed and derived from a variety of viewpoints. There's other reasons, too, but the narrative structure gives an air of minor suspense to the explanations of Kraaijenbrink's approach. That's tricky to pull off, but Kraaijenbrink does so with style, writing with crisp clarity and efficiency, highlighting key takeaways throughout ("Monitor actively; change reluctantly") and offering clarifying sidebars, acronyms, and illustrations (the "6M Model," which "connects doing something meaningful with making money, or profitability, if you will").

Martin's occasional hesitancy—and up-to-date details like him working from home one day—imbue the material with welcome relatability, as his questions may reflect reader uncertainty. Few words are wasted, here, but the teasing out of lessons through believable conversations, with some spirited back and forth, allows Kraaijenbrink to add emphasis and reinforce key ideas in a natural, inviting way without tasking readers with reading repetitive passages. The result is a book that, for readers who don't mind a narrative approach, makes its points in a lasting way, guiding us to them right along with Martin. Self-evaluation questions, a direct conclusive essay, and other features are practical and respectful of readers' time.

This brisk narrative drives home the urgency of involving everyone in strategy.

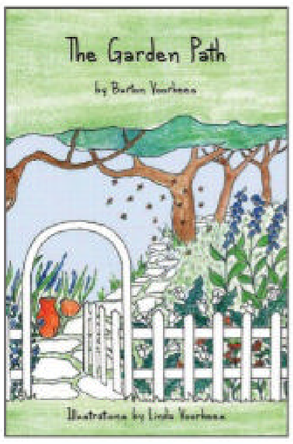
Great for fans of Phil Simon's *Reimagining Collaboration*, Rich Horwath's *Deep Dive.*

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

NONFICTION

The Garden Path

Burton Voorhees | Hawkeye Publishers
149p, trade paper, $13.95, ISBN 978-1-946005-66-3



Voorhees puts a poetic form typically associated with comic doggerel to dedicated spiritual purpose in this urgent, charming collection of limericks, arranged to suggest the stages of a life and a path toward enlightenment. Opening with stanzas about living in a sleep-like state—in which people are "Avoiding the ache/ Of being awake"—*The Garden Path* then journeys on, chapter by chapter, charting a seeker-to-be's development, from first recognizing a need for something more nourishing from this life ("The bird in the ribcage must fly/ But fearful of making a try") to tentative first steps ("Shun greedy confusion!/ Drop that illusion!") and beyond. At long last, in the ninth chapter, the seeker stands confidently before "the image of eternity" knowing that "A sensitive mind/ will find if inclined/ A ship to sail this endless sea."

There's an inspired tension between the limerick form, so rigid and predictable, and the searching, consciousness-expanding material. Voorhees acknowledges this with an imprecation, in introductory material, to "learn the difference between container and content." Since the time of Edward Lear, limericks have encouraged readers to enter a spirit of anticipatory play, their minds reaching ahead to what the final rhyme might be. By contrast Voorhees tends to place less emphasis on the last word—the container—and more on the ideas—content—throughout, inviting readers to search for deeper meaning rather than a punchline.

Inspiring limericks that follow and encourage a spiritual awakening.

Great for fans of *The Penguin Book of Spiritual Verse*, Omar Khayyam.

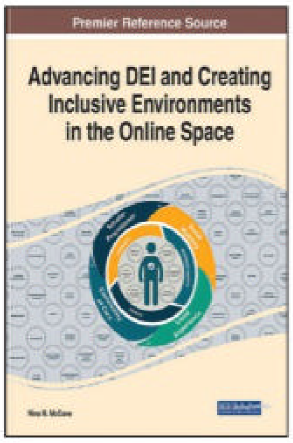
Tasteful sketches accompany verses about what "bozos" we can be and the effort it takes to "attain the goal/ Becoming human, free and whole." To fit the rhyme and meter Voorhees isn't afraid to bend language and grammar, though it seems churlish to complain when the limericks encourage a state of contemplative reverie—and when it's the content that counts. A concluding essay, "Seeking Truth in Dangerous Times," is illuminating, especially when Voorhees, a mathematician, contemplates the mathematics of infinity, through the lens of Omar Khayyam.

Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

POLITICAL & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Advancing DEI and Creating Inclusive Environments in the Online Space

Edited by Nina M. McCune | IGI Global
318p, hardcover, $215, ISBN 978-1-668-45146-5


Premier Reference Source
Advancing DEI and Creating Inclusive Environments in the Online Space
Nina M. McCune

A call for change in education and a pragmatic demonstration of how it can be achieved, this forward-thinking peer-reviewed collection from Walden University, a fully online institution "built on the foundation of positive social change," offers a host of practical-minded papers from academics at Walden and other online schools, all dedicated to perhaps the most consequential question in education in the post-pandemic world: how to offer a more equitable learning experience for all students in an online space. In clear-eyed, practical-minded papers, the authors present the theoretical foundations of creating inclusive online spaces and teaching and learning models, nuts-and-bolts examinations of what the designs of such spaces look like in practice, and core principles for evaluating the inclusivity of the online classroom curriculum.

Those principles are crafted to ensure designs are not systematically biased, that each student feels valued and affirmed, and that students are offered multiple means of expression to demonstrate knowledge. All that's just from this wide-ranging and inspiring volume's first few chapters.

Practical yet inspiring academic papers on how to achieve the best for students in online learning.

Great for fans of Michael Simonson, Susan, Zvacek, and Sharon Smaldino's *Teaching and Learning at a Distance.*

Subsequent sections continue the student-minded, data-driven roadmaps to all that online education could be, as the authors offer illuminating strategies, rubrics, and analysis tools at the classroom and the institutional level. Any teacher of an online course will find value in the discussions of "compassionate grading" (offering empathetic correctives while avoiding grade inflation) or the development of a "person-centered" approach that fully "activates student strengths" and forges "relevant, meaningful connections to their lives."

Walden has committed to a mission of positive social change, and chapters aimed at the institutional level call for a change to traditional strategic planning in favor of "operational plans designed to sustain a culture of community commitment and ensure an inclusive teaching and learning environment." Another examines an innovative "self-assessment toolkit" to help colleges and universities "assess their own readiness to serve historically underserved students." Anyone teaching, administering, or thinking seriously about online education will find much here that's urgent and revelatory.

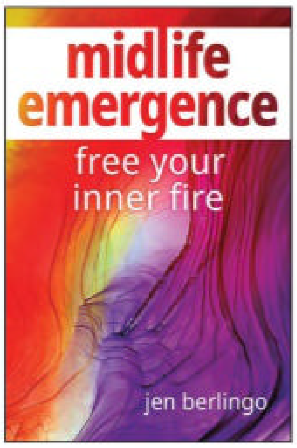
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

EDITOR'S PICK

Midlife Emergence: Free Your Inner Fire

Jen Berlingo | Bold Story Press
283p, e-book, $9.99, ISBN 978-1-954805-47-7



Reiki practitioner and licensed therapist Berlingo pens an intimate letter to the power of self-love in this winning debut. In the midst of her devoted, 14-year marriage to husband Craig, and with a pre-teen daughter, Berlingo describes her own "midlife emergence"—an awakening, of sorts, to the realization that she had "mistak[en] safety for happiness" for the majority of her life. Berlingo delves into her years-long journey of honoring her sexuality as a gay woman, a journey that required her to "create a new paradigm in which to live out the second half of life."

Beyond an intricate portrait of self-discovery, this is a beautiful tribute to living a whole-hearted life. Berlingo—who acknowledges giving away her power for years to conventional expectations of love, marriage, and self-actualization—speaks with a deep wisdom that will resonate with any reader struggling to understand their unmet needs. She honors the fluidity of gender, sexuality, and human relationships in general, while using her personal experiences as a blueprint to "to write my own rule book for my life as an adult." Her marriage, and eventual divorce, will serve as an inspiration, as she and Craig model different forms of love and unconditional support outside of society's traditional beliefs. So, too, will her relationship with her daughter, who identifies as genderfluid, and her pledge to be a "lover to myself, every single day."

A breathtaking tribute to living an untethered, passionate life.

Great for fans of James Hollis's *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life*, Jan Grue's *I Live a Life Like Yours.*

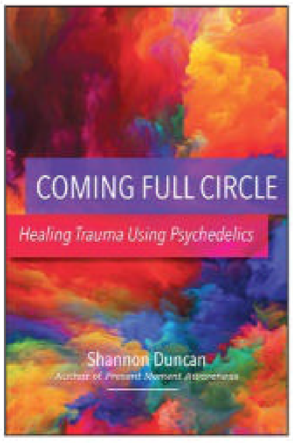
Berlingo includes exercises for readers to utilize in their "own personal quest of midlife emergence," unique invitations that include writing prompts, creative activities, and expressive rituals, all related to the different stages of her own transformation. Her words are almost poetic in their urgency to help readers navigate their own transitions: "I had been throwing the most precious and tender pieces of my heart into the air, not knowing where they would land," she writes, and her principal aim is clearly to be "absolutely free."

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

Coming Full Circle: Healing Trauma Using Psychedelics

Shannon Duncan | Present Moment Press, Inc.
256p, trade paper, $21.95, ISBN 978-1-959254-04-1



This impassioned, deeply personal account of Duncan's experience with "dedicated, guided psychedelic therapeutic work" makes a strong case for the power of what Duncan (author of Present Moment Awareness) calls "psychedelic healing." Despite still being mostly illegal in the U.S., these drugs, he notes, have "been used as tools for entering non-ordinary states of consciousness for thousands of years." In Shannon's case, their utility is to "open the doors within that allow true healing to be possible," and his accounts of his experiments—both casual and later "deeper" and "intentional"—with psilocybin mushrooms, MDMA, Ketamine, and other substances point to their use in helping achieve self-love, feelings of confidence and joy, and "true, authentic growth that once earned cannot be taken away."

Readers who shy away from accounts of trippy, inscrutable trips should rest assured that Duncan's writing, anecdotes, and arguments are clear-eyed and resonant, especially passages addressing how controlled therapeutic psychedelic use helped overcome his own "deeply entrenched defenses" and into wounded areas of his psyche, such as his Jungian "shadow self." Duncan makes clear throughout that this is work not to be taken lightly, urging the participation of "a good psychedelic guide will keep you breathing, relaxing, and anchored in your body." Still, the book abounds with surprises, such as his discovery of a desire and talent to express himself in music.

A clear-eyed account of and guide to healing through psychedelic therapy.

Great for fans of Richard Louis Miller's *Psychedelic Medicine*, Ayelet Waldman's *A Really Good Day.*

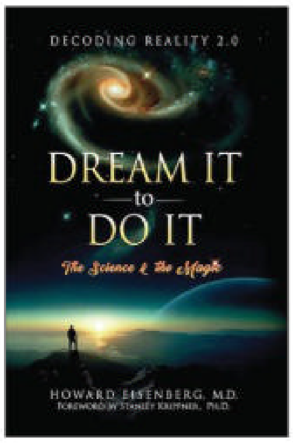
"The interconnected webs of meaning that make up a person's persona and define their sense of reality are far too complex for us to ever be able to predict the end results to any changes within that system," Duncan writes. That's both a promise and a warning. *Coming Full Circle* guides readers to practical, adaptable strategies—prepping for a journey, creating an atmosphere for healing, developing clear intentionality, finding a guide—for helping ensure that seekers manage any such changes arrived at during psychedelic therapy in a positive way, keeping their "gain"s. His story has power, and the hard-won advice is clear and courageous.

Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

SPIRITUALITY/INSPIRATIONAL

Dream it to Do it: The Science & the Magic

Howard Eisenberg | Syntrek, Inc.
134p, e-book, $16.99, ISBN 978-1-737-91691-8



This inviting but provocative exploration of consciousness, reality, and how the former shapes the latter finds Eisenberg (*Inner Spaces: Parapsychological Explorations of the Mind)* again drawing on ancient wisdom, contemporary science, and cross-cultural spiritual teachings, this time to make the case that "the only thing we can possibly know to be true is that we are experiencing awareness of being aware as our present reality." Eisenberg plunges deeply into evidence that our existence and the world we perceive have their source in "an underlying universal field of consciousness of a universal consciousness" and also into the practical questions this raises: how should we live, both as individuals and as members of a society whose "predatory-exploitative mindset …has endangered the entire web of life and is leading us to the point of human extinction"?

Eisenberg, of course, has spent half a century pursuing questions of higher consciousness and what it means for us all, and *Dream It to Do It* lays out a compelling argument in quick, conversational chapters that will communicate clearly to both seasoned seekers and novices alike. For Eisenberg, reality not being what we think it is represents the potential for breakthroughs: if consciousness—that is, the imagination—is responsible for our "consensual" shared existence, then it must also be "the source of everything that we've developed," including scientific discoveries. Imagination, he argues, can quite literally shape reality.

Seekers will find this exploration of reality and collective consciousness illuminating and hopeful.

Great for fans of Stanislav Grof's *The Way of the Psychonaut*, Michael Pollan's *How to Change Your Mind.*

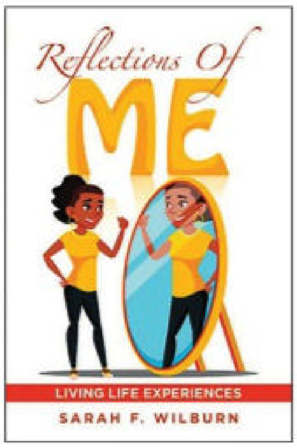
Eisenberg 's guidance on how readers can feel a connection to this universal consciousness and perhaps shape some reality themselves, meanwhile, is comfortingly familiar: meditation ("the ultimate brain hack"), manifesting (rooted in "the Shamanistic practice of "dreaming the world into being"), and more. That familiarity, and the commonalities he draws between global religions, is for Eisenberg more evidence, proof that we can transcend "the egoic self–level of individual consciousness."

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SPIRITUALITY/INSPIRATIONAL

Reflections of Me: Living Life Experiences

Sarah F. Wilburn | Xlibris Publishing
58p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 978-1-669-85828-4



This collection of uplifting poetic "reflections" from Wilburn takes its title literally. The first poems here center on the act of contemplating one's self in a mirror, each building to a celebration of deeper qualities than might be apparent on the surface: character and class rather than passing beauty, which Wilburn casts as "vain," and the assurance, as a Christian, of having a "purpose and plan/ One that is not chosen by man." The declarative narrative poems that follow describe, in loose and personal lines that alternate between couplets and free verse, relatable scenarios, like making the transition to being a stay-at-home wife and mother after decades of teaching ("I wash, I iron, and I put things away./ The pleasure of it all is doing things my way.") or facing "The Math Problems of Everyday Life." That entry's powered by the fun conceit of applying mathematical logic to the kind of problems Wilburn addresses throughout the book: "Take away pain and sorrow and multiply your faith."

That faith is the strong throughline of the pieces collected here, expressed with both exultant pleasure ("Living the Christian Songs of Life" playfully builds a declaration of belief from song titles) and a sense of hard-won advice: "Call on Jesus so you don't go wrong," she writes in "Communications," a poem that opens as a consideration of how humanity sends messages to each other but then twists to emphasize that greater concern.

Touching light verse contemplating a Christian woman's faith, days, and self.

Great for fans of Morgan Harper Nichols, Julie C. Gilbert's *Made to Praise.*

Readers of faith looking for warm, inviting poems connected to everyday life (one entry cautions not to "get upset" when lost and confused in a crowded city) and an emphasis on abiding Christian convictions will find Wilburn's light verse appealing and often touching. The meter and rhyme schemes tend toward the fluid, but this is conversational self-expression, best read out loud, capturing the spirit of what moves and concerns a pure heart.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **B**

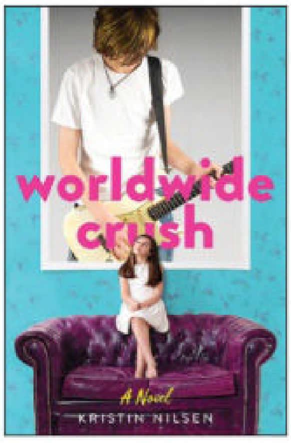
MIDDLE GRADE

EDITOR'S PICK

Worldwide Crush: A Novel

Kristin Nilsen | Sparkpress

272p, trade paper, $12.95, ISBN 978-1-684-63192-6



Former children's librarian Nilsen charms in her literary debut, a first-rate middle-grade tale which showcases the deeply felt moments of tweens and teens in the emotional throes of a celebrity crush. Thirteen-year-old Millie Jackson, like half the world's tweens and teens, crushes hard on 15-year-old Justin Bieber-esque pop star Rory Calhoun. When her idol plans a concert stop in Minneapolis (a stone's throw from Walnut Grove Estates, where Millie lives on Laura Lane) Millie is beside herself with joy. But after Rory has to unexpectedly cancel his Minneapolis concert, Millie is crushed. Her plan B? Convince her parents to vacation in Bodega Bay, California—Rory's hometown—under the guise of a new passion for gray whales and their migration. Surprisingly, they agree—and what happens next is every young girl's fantasy.

Nilsen perfectly captures the angst and emotions of a teenager in the throes of her first celebrity crush—the doodling of "Millie Calhoun" on folders, the emoji-laden texts, the highest highs and lowest lows.Nilsen also includes a first-rate cast of supporting characters, especially Millie's outrageous grandmother Cheryl, who steals every scene she's in; Millie's uber-understanding mother Carrie, and Millie's sassy bestie Shauna. Even more importantly, Nilsen brings subtle but powerful attention to anxiety attacks as a health concern rather than a "crazy" thing, with Rory, refreshingly, thoroughly understanding and supportive of his mother's struggles.

While the story is geared to middle-graders, their mothers will also enjoy reading and remembering their own teen-crush days, a resonant feeling for women of all ages. Even more fun, Nilsen sprinkles in past teen idols' names throughout (such as Leaf Garrett, here a popular middle school teen rather than Leif the Seventies singer) and confesses her own celebrity crush was Shaun Cassidy — which will send mothers back into their first celebrity crushes.

Tweens—and mothers—will relish this story of the giddiness, angst of first love.

Great for fans of Helena Hunting's *Meet Cute*, Sariah Wilson's *#Starstruck*.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

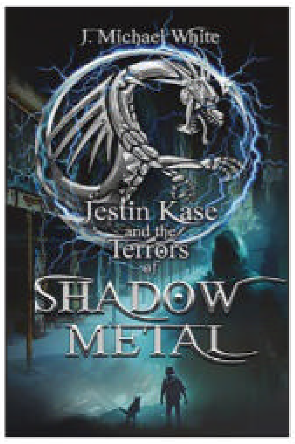
YOUNG ADULT

EDITOR'S PICK

Jestin Kase and the Terrors of Shadow Metal: Dragon Metal, Book 2

J. Michael White | Teer Publishing

376p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0BPZ6GG86



White's 15-year-old hero returns for another action-packed fantasy romp, after *Jestin Kase and the Masters of the Dragon Metal*. As owner of a Dragon Medal, Jestin is protected by a golden power that scales his body and allows him to wield a blade from his own hand. With that type of superhuman ability, he should be able to conquer the world, but his panic attacks and insecurities threaten his confidence. This time, as he finds himself at the center of a dizzying foray of magic and treachery, Jestin must wrangle his self-doubt because evil is brewing. Humanity has been cut off from the heavens, a villain is turning elves into vampire-like monsters, and a mystical ancient book with endless power is about to be stolen. It's up to Jestin and his friends to unravel the chaos and protect the innocent.

White quickly establishes Jestin's wit, humor, and bravery through amusing banter and electrifying action sequences, and amid all that the hero's relatable awkwardness navigating an endearing adolescence crush for his best friend Colt adds to his charm. On the surface, he may seem like a confident young man, but buried under his brazen jests are deep-rooted insecurities from childhood trauma. White masterfully navigates Jestin's internal struggles and gently guides him towards confronting his past. As a result, timeless lessons about pain, suffering, and perseverance are learned.

Those jumping headfirst into this series without previously reading the first book will quickly feel at home in the mystic splendor of the Dragon Metal and medals. There's action and adventure galore, and while some readers may feel overwhelmed by the abundant characters and concurrent storylines, White provides a character list and glossary for clarity. Fantasy fans with a passion for magic will sink into this meticulously crafted world of elves, monsters, and heroes.

A fantasy whose likable teen hero faces monsters, both outside and within.

Great for fans of Paul Cude's The White Dragon Saga, Sean Fletcher's Heir of Dragons Series.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

YOUNG ADULT

Stewart

Andrew Zellgert | Zellgert Books

72p, ebook, $0.99, ISBN 979-8-215-04547-3

STEWART
ANDREW ZELLGERT

Zellgert (The Adventures of Randy trilogy) draws on personal experience with loneliness and depression to craft an emblematic and relatable science fiction journey. The story centers on Stewart, a man who lived in a world without color. Everything was white, with only the black outlines showing edges and corners that were anything other than white. That was until a little girl, running from a policewoman, slipped an orb into Stewart's pocket. It wasn't until he was home and pulled the orb out of his pocket that he found it lit up the world in color. Thus begins Stewart's mission of keeping color in his life and fighting off the frightening forces eager to see everything vibrant drained away.

Stewart floats through outer space in a space suit, facing scary and dangerous figures who want him to fail and give up on himself. Zellgert introduces evils like "Iniquitous" and "Dr. Despondency," who assail Stewart with the kind of thoughts that come with depression, like "nobody likes you" and "you don't deserve to live." Yet these negative figures are regularly scared away by those like The Four Artists, who show Stewart light and color and where to go to escape the darkness. Equally important, Stewart meets friends in space who make him feel less alone, and need his help fighting too.

Although abstract in presentation, Zellgert never pushes the symbolic nature of the story to the point where it's confusing to follow. Readers who can relate to the challenges Stewart faces will find wisdom and encouragement in this treatment of the hurdles created by depression, anxiety, and loneliness, especially as Zellgert shows how those hurdles can be overcome—and, crucially, that sometimes Stewart has to try more than once. When he falls off the path of light, he gets the help he needs to find his way back. Both science fiction and full of heart, this will be a relatable journey many will find inspiring.

A relatable, even inspiring science fiction depiction of depression and loneliness.

Great for fans of Emma Newman's *Planetfall,* Victor LaValle's *The Devil in Silver.*

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

PICTURE BOOK

Bloomie Blooms

Isabel Kuri | Calelei Productions, LLC
36p, hardcover, $16.99, ISBN 978-1-958807-00-2

Bloomie Blooms
By Isabel Kuri

Set in a "beautiful, vast" desert, this bright and uplifting tale of an intrepid and persistent bloom is sure to inspire young readers who need just a bit of encouragement. Told in gentle rhyming verse paired with expressive digital watercolor-like illustrations, Kuri's story offers insight into a little-seen yet vital and fascinating biological process while modeling the trait of perseverance. Bloomie's adorable face and can-do attitude makes them a positive role model and someone it's easy to root for right-off-the-bat, with Kuri putting an inviting face on the cactus's internal cycles—and encouraging reader fascination with the lives of other plants as well.

That doesn't mean the science is in-depth or complex. Instead, Kuri's story of Bloomie's journey to blooming outside on top of the cactus prioritizes the emotional journey, depicting an already fully formed Bloomie making their way through wispy and wavy swaths of green inside the cactus while seeking moisture and trying to find sun. (Adult readers may find themselves explaining some of what precisely the book is depicting.)

This charming tale of a persistent bloom's journey will inspire young readers.

Great for fans of Marianne Dubuc's *And Then the Seed Grew*, Laura Purdie Salas's *A Leaf Can Be . . .*

Still, the hardscrabble nature of desert life comes across with clarity and power, as does the lesson that a thriving life takes effort: "With a little will power / Oh what I can do!"

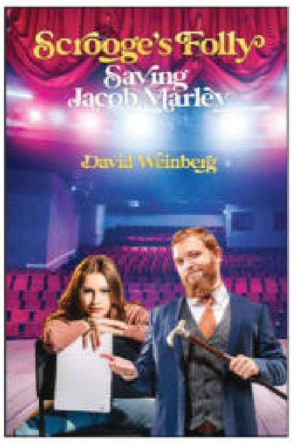
Bloomie Blooms shines as a tool for social emotional learning, especially for young ones who would benefit from seeing flexibility and perseverance in action. Stassen's watercolor-like illustrations and aqua and teal color palette reinforce the message of flow in subtle ways, adding another layer of meaning to the story. The pages are alive with greens and blues inside the cactus, and burst with dazzling sunlight when Bloomie at last buds outside. Bloomie's cheerful face and intrepid spirit lead up to a triumphant and radiant conclusion, showing that hard work does pay off. *Bloomie Blooms* is an approachable and rewarding-to-return-to addition to anyone looking for a nudge of encouragement to bloom.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: A

ROMANCE

Scrooge's Folly: Saving Jacob Marley

David Weinberg | Old Fezziwig Press
293p, trade paper, $16.99, ISBN 979-8-218-10405-4



Weinberg's clever, surprising riff on and corrective to Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* launches from a fruitful question: "How could God let Scrooge be redeemed, while Marley wandered forever, wrapped in chains?" The answer, when it eventually comes, involves love. Also: the transmutation of life into fiction and fiction back into life, achieved through magic, the theater, ghosts, the life of Charles Dickens, and God herself—who looks like a blonde Tina Fey. Also crucial are the machinations of witches of both the 19th and 21st centuries, one of whom treats her lover, an unknowing real-life Scrooge, to a sorcerous vasectomy. For all its wild inventions, at this novel's heart is a portrait of a contemporary playwright, whose work brings her not just a Tony at age 25 but the attention of someone she never could have expected: the ghost of the actual Marley, the man whom Dickens—in, as Weinberg imagines it, a fit of pique and divine inspiration—immortalized as Scrooge's partner in the *Carol*.

The book is wild, comic, sexually frank, restlessly inventive. The narrative vaults over centuries and lives, between mortal and ghostly realms, its best scenes established with quick telling details, about contemporary theater or the gentlemen's clubs of Victorian London. Like Dickens's classic, *Scrooge's Folly* opens in the real world, introducing the fantastical to reveal human capacity for charity and redemption.

A bold, playful riff on Dickens's classic, bursting with ghosts and ideas.

Great for fans of Jon Clinch's *Marley: A Novel*, Samantha Silva's *Mr. Dickens and His Carol*.

This is appealing material often undercut by inconsistent scene-craft. Early chapters centered on the development of playwright Andrea Smilow have the feeling of a script treatment rather than fully dramatized fiction, with crucial events passing in a blink, a tendency that continues throughout. Andrea's compelling, as is her friend Beth, the strongest witch in contemporary North America, though what precisely such a distinction means Weinberg leaves to readers. Andrea's present connects to the pasts of the (real-life!) Scrooge and Marley in gratifyingly surprising ways, and the project, in the second half, of finding redemption for Marley and romance for all is wholly original, building to a happy ending and bursts of comedy and insight.

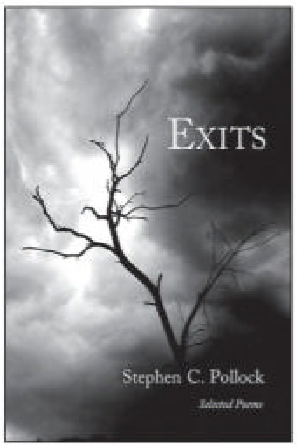
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **B+** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A-**

POETRY

EDITOR'S PICK

Exits: Selected Poems

Stephen C. Pollock
52p, e-book, t$2.99, ISBN 978-1-957-63868-3



Natural opposing entities are prominently featured in Pollock's imaginative poetry collection. The title points to the larger theme, and Pollock considers exits of all kinds, such as the process of toothpaste being "secreted" and the exit of a beloved Japanese woman from this earth. Pollock utilizes scenes and analysis of happenings from the natural world to expound upon the theme of exits, involving many forms of entry as well. This focus gives the work as a whole a worldview current to the nature—and sickness/death-focused—of contemporary life. Further, the poems travel the world, including one based on a Madagascar landscape scene, symbolic of the connectivity available in modern day.

There are darker and lighter poems, but *Exits* has a greater air of sadness; the creative structure and form of each poem serve to make the work a bit lighter. Pollock uses language steeped in Catholicism to discuss the moment where the author is told he has a nose tumor, and writes about lunar phases through the eyes of his daughter who thinks they're "like her new glasses, focusing light / and sharpening the world." Having essentially two focuses in each poem, one in the subject matter and one in the language and form, allows Pollock to more creatively examine concepts and requires the reader to think harder about each short work. It necessitates closer analysis of each line, but not so much analysis that readers will get buried in the weeds of words, as sometimes happens in poems.

Lasting poems examining birth and death, light and dark, largely focused in the natural world.

Great for fans of Ted Kooser, Bob Hicok.

What Pollock achieved here is a unique and diverse group of harmonious poems. It engages the creative while staying grounded in the natural and offers analysis of everyday-life scenes. It can be humorous, but it can also be macabre. These oppositions strengthen the actual writing, and aid Pollock in producing the multi-layered depth that distinguishes lasting poetry.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **B+** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

> *“Over the next three years, we expect to help the industry create better metadata with more effective feedback on problems and inconsistencies, ultimately delivering greater sales.”*

It’s Time to Fix the Plumbing

The executive director of BISG says publishing’s supply chain needs an upgrade

By Brian F. O’Leary

The supply chain we use for book publishing is a lot like an old house. Bringing it up to date is a labor of love that takes a lot of planning, investment, and time. Only when you visit a neighbor who has reimagined their house, do you realize how far behind your own house is.

Though the book industry has evolved with such innovations as online retailing, digital books, and new business models, our plumbing is largely the same as it was 15 years ago. That’s a problem. It limits the ability of publishers, retailers, and other partners in the supply chain to improve discovery, sell more books, and reduce costs. And it leaves too many questions that are difficult to impossible to answer.

For example, there’s no real-time data on how many books are printed each year, where they were printed, or the rate of returns by book type—such as data specifically covering children’s books—across the industry. Retailers who want to share sales data with publishers must use large Excel workbooks with hundreds of columns, which add costs for publishers to format and interpret. Publishers also have difficulty testing new marketing approaches because some distributors and retailers may not pick them up.

These everyday failures in supply-chain communications are like inadequate plumbing. They add work and cost time and understanding. In some cases, they limit what publishers can test or where they can innovate.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Our neighbors are showing us what can be done. BookNet Canada maintains a metadata repository and API that anyone in the supply chain can use. Together, they make it possible to proof metadata and create web catalogs, and even build something entirely new—like 49th Shelf, a collection of Canadian-authored content, dynamically delivered from the metadata that BookNet maintains.

In the U.K., Book Industry Communication maintains protocols called BIC Realtime that allow publishers and their partners to communicate back and forth about inventory and returns. A payments clearinghouse called BATCH also gives retailers the opportunity to pay invoices from multiple publishers with one check or wire, with the system doing the work of apportioning the payments.

The Dutch, French, German, and Norwegian markets offer a variety of solutions for improving the supply chain—some based on centralized repositories, others on implementation of existing standards for two-way communication across all industry players. The U.S. market could adapt many of these practices and solutions to improve discovery, sell more books, and streamline operations to focus on higher value-added activities.

The Book Industry Study Group is currently gathering information to build the business case for change. The priorities are likely to include creating metadata repositories of record, implementing tools to automate and broaden sales and inventory reporting, and launching a payments clearinghouse across the U.S. market. Other goals may emerge as we engage broadly and deepen our analysis.

Over the next three years, we expect to help the industry create better metadata with more effective feedback on problems and inconsistencies, ultimately delivering greater sales, as better metadata drives discovery. Other changes will increase understanding of industry trends and better establish the impact of publishers’ initiatives. Across the board, we’ll also provide a platform for greater efficiency, as labor is redeployed away from reporting and payments processing.

Of course, no single company or organization can fix the plumbing for the book industry. That takes agreements reached across the supply chain, from publishers and distributors to retailers, libraries, and industry service partners.

Our industry has done it before: in the late 1990s, the Association of American Publishers began developing what is now the ONIX standard for metadata, to help retailers create online catalogs with more complete information. Around 2007, the industry moved to the 13-digit ISBN, which helped books enter mass market and specialty stores on a significant scale. These are important advances, but they are also a sign of our infrastructure challenge. It has been 16 years since the 13-digit ISBN was introduced.

Any change effort will take time. To get the ball rolling, we will discuss these issues in detail at the BISG annual meeting on April 28. Anyone from the industry is welcome to attend. The industry-wide support we’ll need represents an investment in the future of book publishing, ensuring we have a house we’re all happy to live and grow in. ■

Brian F. O’Leary is the executive director of the Book Industry Study Group.

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